THE DIVINE WHIP

THE DIVINE WHIP: LIBERATION THEOLOGY, MARXISM, AND THE SANDINISTA REVOLUTION

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ABSTRACT

Religion is not only a belief system but also a system of practices and actions in the world. Thus, modern religious people transform the world through their actions and are in turn themselves influenced by their experience of that world. My contention throughout this work is that religious beliefs and practices cannot be precisely understood outside of a social historical context. In looking at the Nicaraguan revolution it is apparent that the relationship between religion and politics is a vibrant one and that the religious convictions of the faithful bring them into the political realm.

As a result the distinction between religion and politics has become blurred in Latin America and consequently less accessible to traditional methodological approaches. This applies for example, and above all, to the functional approach that ascribes absolute religious motives to some clergy and political motives to more radical clergy. According to the evidence of our thesis, however, the Nicaraguan bishops were no more religious than the radical clergy. Likewise we found that the calls by the Bishops for moral restraint and their invocations against violence were no less 'political' than the promotion of the poor and the Frente Sandinista by the lower clergy. The question became not whether one group was more religious than the other but what christian meanings did each give to their 'political' activities.

From within the situation of conflict in Nicaragua we discovered that Bishops and lower clergy,although both proclaiming the principles of Medellin,did not always agree on the implications of their faith for action.It became necessary to ask the question why this commitment and not another?Rather than reduce these contrary commitments to either class interests or theological predilections, we clarified how religious divisions related to political and economic life in Nicaragua before and during the revolution.By locating Bishops and clergy in the midst of the social friction that swirled around them,we intermingled the sociological,political, religious and economic aspects of our problem,in order to clarify the relationship between the life,the faith,and the actions of both clergy and Bishops.

We concluded that the positions of Bishops and lower clergy during the revolution were related to and reflected the spectrum of political and ideological alternatives held by those who opposed the Somoza regime.Most importantly we demonstated that the particular conjuncture of Sandinista Marxism and Liberation Theology within the turbulent and oppressive social context of Nicaragua acted as the 'Divine Whip' which facilitated the rapprochement of religion and marxism during the popular revolution of 1979.

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Waking each morning with a thesis on your back grinds down your sense of humour,robs you of patience and makes you paranoid about bureaucratic rules which have little to do with the social reality you are trying to write about.I owe much of my success in conquering this beast to the encouragement and cajoling of some special friends;James Joseph Lafferty(who taught me the power of the word)Richard Eros Mason(who's inspired atheism provided an excellent counterpoint to the divine whip),and to Barry'Fly By Night' Johnstone who by his example taught me to synthesize music,mechanics and metatheory into the promise of sociology,many thanks for your friendship.

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INTRODUCTION

I am a student of the social sciences, a Catholic and twenty-nine years old. In the Catholic Church in which I was raised, practising one's religion meant attending mass, receiving the sacraments regularly, and doing charitable acts. Being religious nowadays, at least in the community to which I belong, means (in addition to these traditional activities) signing petitions against human rights violations, prodding local politicians to raise international and local rights issues in parliament, and attending solidarity meetings which include a broad base of society from bishops and nuns to union leaders and communists. These meetings serve as a vehicle where we educate one another on the problems of social justice. In addition, being religious means acting upon these insights either by raising awareness amongst others to issues of justice, or by developing strategies of action aimed at alleviating some of these social problems. This short biographical note underscores and compliments the following discussion of theoretical grounds and methodological considerations.

Quite often a modern religious person becomes enmeshed in the domain of politics. One's religion often colours one's perception of self, society and justice such that a believer's religious convictions become part and parcel of

the normal realm of the political activist. This shared milieu has resulted not only in the mutual dialogue of Christians and Marxists[1] but also, more often than not, has resulted in sharp conflict between the religious and the political.[2]

In general, this cross-fertilization of religion and politics has been a constant phenomenon in Latin American history. The church in Latin America legitimized the Spanish conquest of the Amerindian nations, helped form the constitutional governments of independence, and provided ideological sustenance to post-independence governments. Similarly, these governments provided material support for the church, and political protection for the religious sphere of influence in Latin American society. Perceiving this relationship of politics and religion in Latin America as one of functional interdependence, many analysts conclude that religion promotes conservatism amongst its believers and <u>not</u> radical social attitudes towards change.[3]

In the 1960s the "conservative" nature of religion came into question when the church became involved in programs of social reform and improvement. During the euphoric years of the Alliance for Progress and Catholic Action[4] it appeared that the Latin American church had the capacity to aid modernization by quelling social disorder and promoting social reform within the existing political framework. More recently, as the promise of development

has soured, and increasing dependence and poverty have become the revealed fruits of development, the relationship of religion and politics has turned to conflict and confrontation.[5] This new dilemma arose because of changes in religion and changes in politics. This thesis will explore these general processes through an analysis of changes in the Catholic Church, and of Catholicism in general, and their interaction with politics in Nicaragua.

Daniel H. Levine discusses in Religion and Politics in Latin America, The Catholic Church in Venezuela and Columbia (1981)[6] the tendency in the literature on the church and social change to judge religion and religious institutions as traditional relics or survivors from the past. Some authors maintain that religion has been surpassed nowadays by social and economic processes, as the source for social-political change. Levine rejects this view and writes:

> In theoretical terms, it ignores the fact that religion like all human institutions, grows and changes, transforming its doctrines, structures, and styles of action in response to both new inner understandings and to challenges and changed conditions in society as a whole. To treat religious institutions as mere survivors is to completely miss their dynamic growth and transformation, and their continuing vitality everywhere. Moreover, as an empirical matter such views gloss over enormous changes in catholicism over the last few decades, particularly in Latin America. Few institutions in all of Latin America have changed as rapidly and profoundly as the Catholic Church has, and the intensity, scope, and meaning of this change demand careful and systematic attention. (7)

Levine undertakes to identify religious actions not only in terms of changing theological viewpoints, but also in terms of the impact of socio-historical forces. In his attempt to reintroduce "religious meanings" into a dialectical relationship with social, economic and political processes, Levine draws theoretical support from Max Weber and Clifford Geertz.[8] In general, he argues that what is being investigated is how different religious values or interpretations result in varying social actions. He reasons that religious beliefs order and influence the day to day activities of believers, and that they place their entire daily lives in a transcendental context. As he writes:

> People who are religious place the activities of daily life (be they economic, cultural, social, or political) in a far reaching transcendental context. The activities of daily life are thus infused with meanings deeply rooted in religious belief and experience, and in the felt nature of the religious community to which believers belong. As an intimate part of everyday life, both in conscious and subtle elusive ways, religion thus motivates believers to particular areas of styles of action, generating deep long lasting commitments. (9)

Many 20th century analysts sharply distinguish between religious and political forms of conduct.[10] Levine agrees there are various forms of conduct other than the religious. He criticizes, however, the narrow parochialism of modern theorists who seek to dismiss religion as a source of

political meaning by insisting that in "modern" society church and state are separated. Quite clearly this peremptory conclusion limits discussion of religion and politics. Levine argues this "conclusion" should be the starting point of empirical investigation. The task of analysis, he says, "is to gather from the religious actors definitions, meanings and understandings predicated of religion as religion in the relevant social historical context."[11] Thus the hypothesis that religion is either conservative, or political, or can lead to a political act, becomes the question rather than the answer.

Levine's method presents us with two implications. First, the social analyst must free himself from the "a priori" conceptual assumptions characteristic of a sociology of religion that defines religion in terms of particular social functions, or speaks of the universal function of religion for formation of a complete self (i.e., the needs theory).[12] Likewise the analyst must be prepared to move from the narrow assumption that religion be associated with "churchy" things, to the view that believers could find religious significance in day to day activities. Levine writes:

> a phenomenological approach demands we take religion seriously as a source of guiding concepts and principles, instead of merely subsuming religious phenomena under secular rubrics...the main advantage of this approach lies in its capacity to work with the con-

> cepts and categories that people use in their everyday lives, and thus to avoid the temptation to reduce action and meaning to an externally imposed logic. (13)

Secondly, being religious in accordance with Levine's methodological considerations is not something that takes place in the abstract but in a particular cultural, historical and social context. As he argues,

> It is vital to be specific about historical and institutional contexts, for they provide the matrix through which individual understandings and abstract commitments gain ordered social power. Religious faith and beliefs thus gain socially valid expression only when worked through the parallel and overlapping institutions of the Church and national political life and traditions. (14)

Classical theorists look at religion in modern society as distinct from politics. But this interpretation is misleading. Placing the relationship of religion and politics in an historical context, we find that there is a much greater dynamic interaction than that suggested by the simplistic, static ideal types generated by functionalist theory. The Catholic religion as a social phenomenon cannot possibly be understood without an empirical investigation of the relationship of religion, the Catholic Church and politics in an historical context.

Although we are in search of religion and politics within the context of history, we should not let the monolithic appearance of Catholicism cloud our vision. For

though it appears the Catholic Church in Latin America was perenially "conservative", there have always existed radical elements. As John Raven points out in Christianity and the Social Revolution,

> It is simply not true that Christ's religion has always been an opiate of the people... committed to a rigidly dualistic supernaturalism and therefore indifferent or opposed to an active and revolutionary sociology....We have seen in the last decades plain proof of the importance of the apocalyptic in the early years...and a widespread recognition that the Christian is committed not only to the re-interpretation of his faith but to revolutionary changes both in personal conduct and in the social order. (15)

This insight takes on new importance when one realizes that some of the most virulent criticism of the church, and Catholicism, in Latin America comes from groups inside the church who hold different theological views of what the church represents, and what it should be doing in society (note that this criticism comes not only from those who have a more prophetic view and urge for social revolution but also from those who hold a more conservative view and wish to distance the church from secular activities).[16] How does this tension, that seems to be based on theological premises, spill over into politics? Levine supplies a possible answer:

> Religion and politics...each, in a different way, deals with the broad questions of the meaning of life, offering symbolic models and

> organizational structures to articulate and shape it. Politics, after all, deals at the most general level with the organizing principles and symbols of an entire community here and now. Religion, in turn, provides values and symbols giving general meaning to human existence, placing any given set of social and political arrangements in broader frameworks of significance. Religion and politics thus necessarily impinge on one another; their goals and structure overlap and run into one another as a matter of course. (17)

The issue before us, then, is not religion versus politics, but in what historical context does being religious become political.

In Latin America during the last twenty years the nature of the relationship of religion to politics has changed dramatically.[18] The traditional problems of religion, such as encroaching secularism, centered on the church's attempts to maintain its religious mandate over morality, marriage, education, etc. The main concern of politics also centered on expanding its control over these same issues. In recent years there has been some change between these two. The churches present new problems on the political scene because they have become a motivational force for social change which includes unionization, agrarian reform and literacy programs. And in some cases the church has taken up the call for the defence of human rights (providing in some "extreme" political states the last institutional shield against oppression).[19] But are these actions

purely political? It would seem not. Since the bishops' conference in Medellin, Colombia (1968)[20] more and more clergy and lay groups have openly involved themselves in issues affecting the poor. Quite often defending the poor has brought these elements of the church into conflict with one another, and with the state. This "political" development, however, does not spring from a partisan political ideology (even though secular Marixst and sociological analysis may be employed in analyzing the social situation). It stems primarily from two recent theological developments: (1) a new notion of religious community found in the documents of Medellin and later ratified at the Puebla Conference (Mexico 1978) called the Communidade de base, and (2) a religious ideal taken from the classic teachings of Christianity and updated in the Theology of Liberation in "The Preferential Option for the Poor" (this became the major mandate of the church as outlined at Puebla in 1978).[21] These changes in Catholic "religious" values and ideology have become political when practised in the social political framework of Latin America. Thus, in Latin America the increasing authoritarianism of political regimes, and the trend towards national security states,[22] has infected the political atmosphere so that programs which promote the poor appear subversive and therefore "political" in the eyes of the ruling political elites. It is within this dynamic framework that we must question the relationship of religion

and politics.

The structure of this thesis is faithful to these theoretical considerations. Chapter I explores the relationship of religion and politics in Latin America, and discusses some of the newer historical work being done in this area. Chapter II presents the theological language and concepts used by the professional religious. The chapter offers an analysis of the historical development of theological ideas in Latin America (i.e., a critical description of Christendom, Neo-Christendom, and Liberation Theology). Moreover, the major theme and method of Liberation Theology is clarified so that similar themes can be identified in the statements of Nicaraguan clergy and laity during the revolution. Chapter III mixes these analytic concepts from theology with analysis of the history of the church in Nicaragua to show the linkage between theological ideas and historical contexts. Chapter IV starts by outlining some of the major changes in religion and politics that took place in Latin America in the 1960s, showing how these broader issues became manifested in Nicaragua during the rule of Anastasio Debayle Somoza. A major effort is made to analyse the church's role leading up to, and during, the Nicaraguan revolution of 1979. The conclusions to Chapter IV offer an interpretation of the role of the professional religious in the revolution, and an analysis of the present relationship of religion and politics, given the

number of clergy in the Nicaraguan reconstruction government.

Footnotes

1. See Jose Miguez Bonino, Christians and Marxists, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishers, 1976. See also, John Eagleson and John Drury (translator), Christians and Socialism: Documentation of the Christians for Socialism Movement in Latin America. Maryknoll, New York. Orbis Books, 1975. See also, Jeannie Hornosty, The Contemporary Christian Marxist Dialogue, A Case Study in the Political Economy of Religion with Special Reference to Quebec. Ph.D. dissertation, York University, 1979.

2. Brian Smith, "Religion and Social Change: Classical Theories and New Formulations in the Context of Recent Developments in Latin America." Latin American Research Review 10 (summer) 3/34.
T.G. Sanders, "The New Latin American Catholicism" in D. E. Smith, ed., Religion and Political Modernization, pp. 282-302. New Haven Yale Press, 1974.
Thomas F. O'Dea, The Catholic Crisis, Boston, Beacon Press, 1968.

3. Guenter Lewy, Religion and Revolution, New York, Oxford Press, 1974. See also, Michael Dodson, "The Christian Left in Latin American Politics", Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs, 21.1 (Feb. 79), pp. 45-68. For example, Miguez Bonino talks about the dampening effect of religion upon revolutionary action in Latin America, the depth to which Christianity--as a sociological entity--has penetrated and still molds the Latin American consciousness, at a visceral level where theoretical, rational explanation fails to make an impact....People "live their economic and social aliena- in a world of mythical representation which political ideology cannot reach" (Christians and Marxists, p. 26).

4. Gerhard Drekonja, "Religion and Social Change in Latin America", Latin American Research Review, 1971, 6 53-72.

5. Ibid., passim. See also, Brian Smith, "The Church and Human Rights in Latin America: Recent Trends on the Subcontinent" in Daniel Levine (ed.) Churches and Politics, Sage Publications, California, 1979. For a discussion of the church in authoritarian regimes see Jose Comblin, The Church and the National Security Problem, Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1979.

6. Daniel Levine, Religion and Politics in Latin America, The Catholic Church in Colombia and Venezuela. Princeton, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1981, p. 2.

7. Ibid., p. 4.

8. Max Weber, The Sociology of Religion, Boston Beacon Press, 1963, and Clifford Geertz, Islam Observed: Religious Development in Indonesia and Morocco. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Phoenix Books, 1973.

9. Op.cit., Levine, Religion and Politics, pp. 4., see also Daniel Levine, "Issues in the Study of Culture and Politics: View from Latin America." Publius 4:2 (spring 1974), pp. 77-104.

10. Ivan Vallier, Catholicism, Social Control, and Modernization in Latin America. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1970. See also his work "Extraction, Insulation, and Re-entry: Towards a Theory of Religious Change" in H. Landsberger (ed.) The Church and Social Change in Latin America, pp. 9-35. Notre Dame University Press, 1970. See also Kalman Silvert, Churches and States: The Religious Institution and Modernization, New York, American Universities Field Staff, 1967. All of these works utilize a modernization model typical of development politics based upon a functionalist model of dynamic equilibrium.

11. Op.cit., Levine, Religion and Politics, p. 14. Levine quote C.W. Mills "on history" from The Sociological Imagination. New York, Oxford, 1959.

12. For a general discussion of these models, see Charles Glock and Phillip F. Hammond, Beyond the Classics? Essays in the Scientific Study of Religion. New York: Harper & Row, 1973.

13. Op.cit., Levine, Religion and Politics, p. 12.

14. Ibid., p. 14.

15. See Donald Kitchen, John Lewis, Karl Polanyi, Christianity and the Social Revolution, Freeport, New York: Books for Library Press, 1972, p. 27.

16. Michael Dodson, "The Christian Left in Latin American Politics" in D. Levine (ed.) Churches and Politics in Latin America, Sage Publications, 1980.

17. Op.cit., Levine, Religion and Politics., p. 6.

18. Op.cit., Drekonja, passim. and Wilde, "Ten Years of Change in the Church" in D. Levine, Churches and Politics, op.cit., p. 267.

19. See op.cit., Brian Smith, Church and Human Rights" in D. Levine (ed.) Churches and Politics, pp. 155-194.

20. See discussion of Medellin in Chapter II. This conference which took place in Colombia in 1968, set the guidelines for most radical church activity in the ensuing decade.

21. See Bruneau, "Basic Christian Communities in Latin America: Their Nature and Significance" in Daniel Levine, Churches and Politics, op.cit., pp. 225-238.

22. Op.cit., Jose Comblin, passim. See also R. Calvo, The Church and the Doctrine of National Security", in D. Levine (ed.) op.cit., pp. 135-155.

CHAPTER I

RELIGION AND POLITICS

The historical changes that took place in Latin American politics and in the Latin American church during the 1960s attracted a number of scholars interested in the classic question: Can religion promote social change?[1] These contemporary scholars vary widely in their conclusions. Both Michael Dodson and Thomas Bruneau note that, depending on the point in time and the particular country studied, church analysts have seen the church as either a positive force (ranging from a moderate to a dynamic catalyst) or a negative force (ranging from a mild obstacle to a serious obstacle) for social change.[2]

Part of this variety exists because there has not been a uniform history of church state relations in Latin America. The pattern varies widely. As Thomas Bruneau writes,

> Despite the common patterns in the colonial eras the national histories of Latin American churches are very different. In some countries the church has been forced out of key political roles through revolution (Cuba, Mexico) whereas in others, after periods on the fringes of national society, it has come to play a dominant role (Colombia, Chile).... Thus to make generalizations about the Latin American 'church' is in itself a risky proposition. (3)

Since the 1960s an even greater diversity has developed in the church, to the extent that different tendencies exist side by side in the same national church.

Whereas Thomas Bruneau accounts for this variety in the literature based on questions of time and space,[4] Michael Dodson in "The Christian Left in Latin America" denies that this variety represents a mix of opinions. Dodson feels that this apparent variety misrepresents the true spectrum of opinions within the church on the relationship of religion and politics by systematically overlooking some of the more radical positions. He attributes this misrepresentation to the narrow methodological framework employed by most Latin Americanists. As he writes:

> (there is) a strong tendency in the literature to explain and judge the entire range of groups (of progressive priests) and their points of view from a single interpretive framework. Until recently (with the exception of Levine and Bruneau)[5] the predominant conceptual approach to the study of the Latin American church and its role in social change was drawn directly from the developmental paradigm which informed the broader study of comparative politics in the 1960s.(6)

This developmental approach comes out of a particular brand of sociology and political thought called functionalism.[7]

Functionalism is not a monolithic school of thought. There are various cross-currents within the discipline, and I cannot outline here all the studies that fall under

this general outlook. All types of functionalism, however, do assume that human activities are organized to maintain the stability and continuity of the society. Religion, then, is thought of as a 'part' of society, like the other institutions such as the family or the state. These parts are seen as fitting together in an organic whole, based on the sample of the human body. The various parts or institutions of society perform functions vital to the maintenance and continuity of the whole system. These various parts are interrelated and considered to be in a state of balance or homeostasis. This balanced social whole does change (indeed the equilibrium is known as dynamic equilibrium) but this balance is maintained by a smooth adjustment to the conditions of change. Revolutionary disjunction, according to functionalists, does not promote positive change but throws the entire system in disbalance, chaos and dysfunction.

This type of "a priori" reasoning about the nature of society precludes any discussion of alternative possibilities to contemporary social structures because all social structures and practices represent necessary functions for the maintenance and continuity of society. Furthermore, because individual aspirations are assumed to coincide with the fundamental goals of society (i.e., smooth change and maintenance of a stable society), this approach tends to

be conservative about ways to rectify social problems. Even though functionalists recognize change, and modernization theorists study ways to affect change, they both perceive types of conflict in society as pathological, and antithetical to progress. When studying religion and social change from this perspective the tendency is to regard the activities of progressive priests or radical clergy as pathological and separate from the normal role the church can play in social change.

Newer studies of the church are undermining this normative polarization of acceptable and pathological types of priestly activities. Using historical approaches, analysts show that the church has always been involved in politics in Latin America. This historical evidence undermines the axiomatic assumption of functionalist approaches that only a clear separation of church and state enables religion to be used effectively to promote social change. Critics of functionalism argue that the historical non-involvement of the church with politics was in itself a political stance (i.e., the church's "neutrality" contributed to the legitimacy of oppressive governments). Not only does this evidence undermine the neat theoretical separation of religion and politics in functionalism, it likewise suggests that the more radical, and consequently political, church activities <u>could</u> promote social change. At least an historical approach suggests it is an empirical question,

and not an a priori assumption, that conflict is dysfunctional.

Ivan Vallier,[8] the most noted expert on the church in Latin America, uses this type of functional approach in his analysis of the role of the church and modernization. Very simply, Vallier saw that the key to understanding the church rested in studying how the church went about maintaining its social influence in society. First, he developed a typology of church elites (papists, pastors, politicians, and pluralists) differentiated on functional grounds. He then argued that papists and politicians concerned themselves with the threats society posed to a weak church. Politicians, he said, aligned themselves with the political status quo to retain church influence and were "oriented to the power structure of society...(looking) to outside groups for support, protection and legitimation." The papist, on the other hand, urged a politically detached church which would derive its authority in society from its own Christian self-image. Vallier's third ideal type, the pastors, were even less concerned with public image and more interested in building strong worship-centered congregations through lay initiative, and the fostering of small communities. Finally, the pluralists (Vallier's most radical elite though representative of only a part of the left within the church) were considered most progressive because they mingled with the poor, sharing their living

conditions, and sometimes aligned themselves with secular justice groups in order to promote change in their parishes.[9]

For Vallier each national church was composed of varying ratios of these elites. He theorized, however, that certain ratios were more conducive to promoting change. For example, he argued that the most conservative churches had a predominance of 'political elites', and did not lend themselves to rapid change. Moreover, he contended that the presence of a strong political elite led to the mushrooming of its ideological opposite: the pluralists. This confrontation ended in stalemate because the politicians would blunt any innovative programs suggested by the pluralists. As a solution, Vallier argued that only the papists, acting as a catalyst between these two groups, could bridge the gap and allow for a rapprochement between the groups. As he wrote,

> The papists appear to be the key transition elite for the effective development of the other two elites, pastors and pluralists. With their emphasis upon political detachment, improving church organizations, involving laymen, and on defining an articulated set of theologically based conceptions of 'mission in society' the papists form a bridge between the traditional politicians and the new pastors and pluralists. (10)

There are two clearly functionalist assumptions in Valliers ideal types that limit his understanding of history. The first is the assumption that the church remains politically

detached while asserting its spiritual authority over men. This is clear in Vallier's distinction between the two types of pluralist priests. In his study of the church in Colombia he discriminates between those pluralists who promote programs that bear on social problems (he calls these the good or functional innovators) and thos priests like Camilo Torres and the Golconda group[11] who directly attacked the root causes of poverty through criticism of the power relations of society. Priests like Torres who joined the guerillas or supported their positions were seen as dysfunctional (and detracting from any positive good the church could perform) because of their direct involvement in politics. Secondly, Vallier assumes these elites are logically and chronologically dependent on one another. Therefore, he argues, the emergence of an overly radical approach leads to dysfunction in this smooth process (and thus undermines modernization).[12]

Vallier's work has come under criticism from numerous quarters, and we will look now at Michael Dodson's[13] criticism of this approach, and the developmentalist approach in general. Dodson finds the language and perspective of developmental literature problematic because they give the impression that only liberal reformist priests are the progressive or dynamic force behind changes in the church's relationship to politics (by categorically assigning both ultra-conservative and radical priests a negative,

counterdevelopmental role). As such, Vallier fails to distinguish between reformist priests and guerilla clergy. Dodson also disagrees that the church is only prophetic when it promotes consensus in a pluralistic society, and argues that the church could contribute to social change by involving itself in conflictual politics.

Dodson concludes that the developmental perspective suggests: (1) a single homogeneous change oriented church in Latin America when indeed it is complex, diverse and even at odds internally; (2) that even if the approach recognizes the diversity of religious innovations (As Vallier did) it fails to include, or systematically avoids, both the radical left and the conservative right in its analysis. Dodson argues that these developmentalist typologies have become ends in themselves, so that the narrow parochialism of the method used dismisses by definition attempts by more radical religious to promote social change. Arguing for a more inductive approach, Dodson feels we must examine all aspects of reality and all forces for social change, and not simply restrict ourselves to those forces in keeping with our own theoretical and normative goals. Thus whether radical or progressive acts can lead to social change becomes the empirical question and not a peremptory theoretical assertion.

Dodson points to Vallier's distinction between 'clerical' and 'pastoral' radicals as symptomatic of this

methodological myopia. Dodson writes, "Vallier's virulent criticism of the clerical radicals typifies the normative framework of the developmental approach, that is...that a 'prophetic' modernizing church is not radical but liberal and apolitical."[14] Examining Vallier's distinction between clerical and pastoral radicalism he writes,

> Vallier expounded the differences between pastoral radicalism and clerical radicalism as seen form a developmentalist perspective. In pastoral radicalism the priest avoids using his religious office as a basis for building up social and political authority. He carefully sidesteps all partisan involvement or identification. In his pastoral activity 'the religious floor is generalized source of certainty and identity for other roles in society, but it is not the base on which choices are made.' The religious norms fostered by the priests are suprapartisan in his model, transcending specific political options and therefore rising above political conflict. Thus, pastoral radicals can promote the 'Christian revolution' while at the same time helping depoliticize society and foster civic development. (15)

Dodson questions the value implicitness of Vallier's position by examining his use of the case of the guerilla priest Camilo Torres to develop a template of clerical radicalism. He writes,

> In Vallier's view, the clerical radicals are politically 'retrogressive' (counter developmental) for many reasons. First, they engage in direct political action through religio-political movements on the Left, and they 'lead' the social revolution. Since such activity is partisan, it must be conflictual in its impact and therefore retrogressive with respect to nation building.(16)

He tests Vallier's dichotomy by examining the case of the worker priests in Argentina and the 'Christians for Socialism' movement in Chile. He discovers that the clerical radicals are not the 'super guerilla' types that Vallier's model suggested as a prototype. Indeed Dodson finds an entire spectrum among the left clergy who are involved in 'partisan' politics, some to a greater and some to a lesser degree. Moreover, he shows that despite dirtying their hands in social issues, these radical groups have promoted substantial social change by bringing the power of their office into the political arena.

Dodson makes two additional points that have a direct bearing on our study of the Nicaraguan church. First, in his discussion of the 'Christians for Socialism' in Chile, he describes how it is an illusion of developmentalists that the church is politically neutral just because it refrains from partisan politics. Dodson reasons that the attempt by the hierarchy of the Chilean church to distance itself from the leftist tendencies of the 'Christians for Socialism' (by detaching itself from the U.P. government of Salvadore Allende) was itself a partisan choice by the more conservative clergy to prevent the <u>political</u> left from gaining power in the elections of 1973. In this sense, their non-political stance became political.[17]

Secondly, from the Argentinian situation, Dodson reasons,

> When it is in the church's corporate interests (as seen by the hierarchy and not the left of the church) to disassociate itself from the regime, an alliance between the left (which gives the traditional church linkages at grass-roots levels) and the hierarchy, however informal, can be effective in mounting a powerful campaign of denunciation. Clearly, both elements of the church are pursuing a political strategy in such a case. Vallier saw the importance of disassociating church and regime, but he denied it was a political option and his theory prevented him from seeing the possibility ...of the radical left providing the energy to bring about the disassociation and making the church a prominent voice for social change. (18)

Clearly, Dodson shows that in certain historical contexts the reason the church separates from the regime has political motives. These motives, though not coincident with those of the leftist clergy, may lead to alliances with the left of the church. Thus Vallier's suggestion that politicians 'politic' and clerics confine themselves to being religious is too neat a separation, and nowadays in Latin America even the most theologically conservative clergy find it impossible to achieve.

Politics and social life in general are bringing new problems to religion in Latin America, and the changes in religion itself are presenting new problems for authoritarian governments. As Levine writes,

> even pastoral actions undertaken for the most conventional motives (charity or aid to the sick, for example) can take on political character and consequences, especially in highly divided or repressive situations. Pastoral action can mean many things, and

> in Latin America today it is an open question just how far and in what direction, it extends. Is it limited to the provision of comfort, solace, and charity? May it encompass testimony, bearing witness to and sharing the conditions of people's lives as a sign of human solidarity? Need it include denunciation of those social conditions which make a fully human and moral life impossible, such as extreme poverty and oppression? Or must it be developed even further, to provide a theory for action, making religious communion a part of social and political reconstruction? These issues are alive in the church today. (19)

In summary, recent works in history, politics and religion have undermined much of the idealized, and static models of church-state relations in Latin America. For these reasons the socio-historical approach I will use is more descriptive of what people do rather than an attempt to successfully test predictions. As such the approach can better be called an inductive attempt that seeks to make interpretations of the relationship of religion and politics. As Levine suggests, this relationship will not be an immediately apparent one.

> In much of Latin America, the Catholic hierarchy has responded to pressures for greater political involvement by emphasizing that the Bishops' responsibilities are 'pastoral' (and hence, in their eyes, nonpolitical). But if the scope of "pastoral" duties is expanded along the lines suggested above, such actions can heardly be kept out of politics, especially as the meaning of politics itself is stretched beyond the confines of government or of partisan conflict alone. For, like 'pastoral action', "politics" can also be broadened to include denunciations of injustice, which bring new issues to the

> agenda of national life, or to massive community actions, such as land invasions, which seek to redress grievances and change the social structure of power and opportunity in daily life. Such activities while not political in a narrowly partisan sense of the word are none the less political in essence: they raise the basic issues of power, authority, legitimacy, and distribution. (20)

Starting from religious beliefs we will consider the role of religious believers in Nicaraguan society. By considering minority groups of the clergy and laity as active elements in the changing relationship between religion and politics we allow for the possibility that small groups within the church may influence the outcome and direction of the relationship of religion and the church to national politics.

Although this approach emphasizes religious meanings, we do not lose sight of the social, political and economic forces that exert structural pressure upon religious activities. Indeed, quite often the choices and actions of the religious are the result of social context and not predictable of religion itself. Therefore, not only do we clarify the impact of religious views upon the meanings the faithful accord to history and the imperatives they draw for social action, but we also locate them within an historical account of the changing meanings in Catholicism, and the changing structural impingements upon church-state relations in Nicaragua. History, then, and the social

context are shown to play an important role in the genesis of radical theology, and contextual state differences (over time) are presented to demonstrate the impact of social structural factors upon the choices and actions of clergy and laity.

It is difficult to make a linear causal argument that ideas determine social action. Likewise a stiff historical materialism that argues religious ideas are preceeded by, and products of, the larger socio-economic forces of society does not account for the dynamics of history. Clearly, a dialectical relationship exists between ideas and social forces, and no simple causal relationship.

An empirical study of the dynamics of religion and politics in Nicaragua traces inductively the radicalization of a vanguard minority of the Nicaraguan clergy by examining their shift from a liberal presence in the Nicaraguan church to a more confictual role during the last years of Somoza's rule. We explain this trend against a background of changes in Catholicism and politics in Nicaragua. More specifically we interpret this trend within the context of increasing violence and oppression by the regime, as well as against the increasing popularity of the armed left and the increasing contradictions of the Nicaraguan economy. Finally, we examine the role of the progressive clergy in the revolution of 1979, their proximity to the sandinistas, and their participation in the reconstruction of the country as members of the Sandinista government.

Footnotes, Chapter I

1. Brian Smith, "Religion and Social Change: Classical Theories and New Formulations in the Context of Recent Developments in Latin America." Latin American Research Review 10:2 (Summer 1975), pp. 3-34.

2. Dodson makes the following breakdown, in D. Levine (ed.) Churches and Politics, pp. 111-135:

   1. the dynamic force for social change (D. Smith, 1970; Sanders 1970; Drekonja, 1971; Williams 1969, 1973; Turner 1973; Vallier 1967, 1970).
   2. moderate force for social change (B. Smith 1975, 1976; Levine & Wilde 1977).
   3. a mild obstacle (Dekadt 1967, 1970, 1971).
   4. a serious obstacle to change (Mutchler 1969; Vekemans, 1964).

   All of these works can be found in the bibliography. Bruneau's work attests to this mix of opinions on the church and social change; see Bruneau, "Obstacles to Change in the Church", Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs, Vol. 15, No. 4, November 1973.

3. Op.cit., Bruneau, p. 396.

4. Dodson agrees that part of the inconsistency can be explained by the differences in time or in national churches but he is more concerned to undermine the stereotypical attempts to treat the religious left as outside the church, and therefore outside an analyst's developmental framework. Likewise Dodson is critical of the way the left is presented as a monolithic force when in truth there is an entire spectrum of activities left of center which range from organizing people into community groups to joining armed struggles.

5. Both Levine and Bruneau take careful historical approaches to their works, locating their findings within particular historical contexts. Bruneau "reluctantly" approves of part of Vallier, seeing the diocese as the locus for the investigation of change. I agree with this methodological insight and feel it is a possible way to strengthen this thesis. But at present it is beyond the scope of my resources as it involves going to Nicaragua. Bruneau's work on Brazil follows this schema. See bibliography.

6. Dodson, op.cit., in Levine, Religion and Politics, p. 112.

7. See C.W. Mills, The Sociological Imagination, New York, Oxford, 1959, especially the chapter on grand theory; see also Dahrendorf, 1958, "Out of Utopia, Toward a Reorientation of Sociological Analysis", AJS 64(2): 115-127. For a discussion of the comparative approach in politics see Almond, G. and B. Powell (1966) Comparative Politics, A developmental Approach, Boston: Little Brown. See also D. Chalmers (ed.), Changing Latin America: New Interpretations of Its Politics and Society, Montpelier, V.T. Capital City Press, 1972.

8. See Ivan Vallier, "Religious Elites: Differentiations and Developments in Roman Catholicism", in Seymore Martin Lipsett and A. Solari (eds.) Elites in Latin America, pp. 190-232. New York, Oxford Press, 1967. More recent works include "Radical Priests and Revolution" in D. Chalmers, op.cit., pp. 15-26 and "Extraction, Insulation, and Re-entry: Towards a Theory of Religious Change", in H. Landsberger, ed. The Church and Social Change in Latin America, pp. 9-35. Notre Dame University Press, 1970. See also his book, Catholicism, Social Control and Modernization in Latin America, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1970.

9. Vallier, op.cit., Elites..., pp. 190-232.

10. Vallier quoted in Mutchler, D., The Church as a Political Factor in Latin America, Praeger Publishers, New York, 1971, p. 10. Mutchler is very critical of Vallier's functionalism and posits a much more competitive relationship between these various elites.

11. Camilo Torres, the Colombian priest and intellectual turned freedom fighter and guerilla,has become a symbol of the revolutionary priest. He argued that a priest was foremost a Christian and his duty was to love his neighbour. However, he found that the social conditions of life prohibited the true expression of brotherhood and he took up arms to bring about a more Christian world. See his Cristianismo y Revolucion, Mexico, Ediciones Era, 1970. Golconda was a radical group of clergy and lay activitsts formed in Colombia in the 1960s.

12. See Vallier's "Radical Priests and Revolution", in Chalmers op.cit., pp. 22-23.

13. Dodson, op.cit., passim.

14. Dodson, op.cit., p. 114 in Levine (ed.).

15. Ibid., p. 115.

16. Ibid., p. 115.

17. Ibid., pp. 130-131.

18. Ibid., p. 131.

19. Levine, "Religion and Politics, Politics and Religion" in Levine (ed.), p. 24.

20. Ibid., p. 24.

CHAPTER II

THEOLOGY IN LATIN AMERICA

Although most traditional theologians claim theology is apolitical, because the religious sphere of duty is considered separate from the secular, we cannot deny that theology exerts political influence over the faithful. The question, then, is not whether theology is political in Latin America, but what kind of political stance has theology taken in the continent's history.

Before beginning analysis of the political predilections in Latin American theology we must clarify the various views of the church's role in that society.[1] The church has been divided at all levels concerning its purpose in this world. These various visions can be summed up in two different schools of thought and action. On the one hand, the church has been divided at all levels concerning its purpose in this world. These various visions can be summed up in two different schools of thought and action. On the one hand, the church has supported the status quo, aligning itself with those in power, in order to evangelize the masses and teach the tenets of the faith. On the other hand, some bishops and priests professed a popular Christianity which

sought to evangelize while changing the social conditions of the populus, and as a result came into conflict with the institutionalized, hierarchical church. The official church has often ostracized, expelled or disbanded these groups because of their social activities.

In Latin America these two opposing ideologies were initially manifested in the church's attitude towards the indigenous peoples. In the colonial period of Latin America, the prophetic clergy[2] defended the rights of the Indians whereas the mainstream church, in accord with the white civilian elite, approved their compulsory labour on encomiendas and compulsory conversion to Christianity. Jose Comblin, in The Church and the National Security Problem,[3] identifies these themes throughout the history of the Latin American church. He names these two opposing ideologies the 'mystical' and the 'realistic' theory, with the realistic supporting the status quo and the mystical supporting the masses. (This distinction has important parallels with the Weberian contrast between priests and prophets. Priests are involved in the institutionalization and rationalization of religion. Prophets challenge institutional authority.)[4] Comblin contends some priests and bishops have always lived the Christian faith in a prophetic or mystical manner and in support of the poor and oppressed. The prophetic priests' challenge to institutional authority appears to take a political stance. Comblin argues, however,

this radical challenge is no more political than the stance by the realistic priests in their alliance with the crown of Spain.

Similarly, we find these same two ideological visions in Enrique Dussel's analysis of The History of Theology in Latin America.[5] Dussel, a noted Argentinian theologian and church historian, identifies three types of theology in Latin American history. The first, Christendom, was the colonial theology that arrived with the Spanish and endured in a modified form until the twentieth century. Christendom was replaced by the theology of development (a phenomenon which arose in the 1950s during a decade of economic optimism and modernization). Dussel considers both of these theologies politically conservative. On the other hand, he counters that the new theology of liberation, which arose in the 1960s, has a radical understanding of the Bible, Latin American society, and a bias to the political left.

These political postures derive from the contrary theological assumptions which each vision makes of the church's responsibility for its social reality. They directly parallel the mystical and realistic distinctions made in Comblin. Conservative theologians will argue, for example, that traditional theology was responsible for the evangelization of the entire continent and the clergy fulfilled, in the name of God, the church's role as 'baptizer

of the world.' Liberation theologians, however, argue that the present misuse and abuse of theology to legitimate unjust social structures casts a dark shadow on theology's former purely 'religious' role. Indeed, calling upon the same gospel as the conservative theologians, liberationists argue that Jesus Christ associated with the poor and despised the rich and powerful. Therefore they criticize Christendom's political alliance with the Spanish conquistadores, and later the independence governments, and they rebuke Christendom for its failure to identify Christ's suffering with that of the masses.

Likewise, liberation theologians extend their criticism to the theme of modernization in the theology of development. They reject modernization (desarollismo)[6] as antithetical to any positive social change. Based on a decade of economic regression the liberationists developed a critique of this theory and accused desarollistas of a bias towards gradual change, imported models of development, and imported cultural values. These biases, reasoned liberationalists, led to a retrenchment of the rich classes and offered no advancement for the masses.

It became the intention of liberation theologians to attack both of these theologies by raising consciousness among theologians and laity about the political biases implicit in traditional theology. Furthermore, liberation theologians (who comprise a small minority in the church)

attempted to politicize the whole church by bringing the prophetic message of the gospel into tension with the political issues of the day.

In summary, we find that the Catholic Church contains both prophetic and rational institutionalistic elements. Of these elements, the latter is in the majority. The lesser element, however, is the ground from which the theology of liberation sprang into the arena of politics. And thus, the emergence of the theology of liberation into current politics is not a new departure, but a specific new relationship of religion to politics which replaces and competes with those that existed in the theologies of Christendom and development.

CHRISTENDOM

Christendom, for Dussel, comprises as constituent parts both the basic tenets of Christianity and the Mediterranean culture which fostered its growth and expansion. And it was Christendom, and not simply Christianity, that was imposed upon the Amerindians of the continent of South America. Religious conversion, then, initiated the Indians into a culture (not simply a new liturgy) from which they received a new identity. Thus Christendom represents for Dussel a superimposed culture of values alien to the traditional society. For him the theology of

Christendom represents a theology of the center for the periphery, a colonial theology, a colonizing theology, a theology of the conquistadores which in its very nature was highly political and destined to become the transnational culture of Latin America.[7] As a result, Latin America is known as the 'Catholic Continent' with over 90% nominal Catholics in a population of over 250 million.

Of course, after the initial evangelization by the colonialist clergy, the new transmitters of the complete culture of Christendom were the Latin American seminary professors themselves. Dussel says of these 'brighter lights' that they went to Europe to study liturgy, catechetics and theology and became 'Frenchified', 'Germanized', and 'Italianized.'[8] Thus he concluded that they were out of touch with the Latin American society.

Erosion of Christendom, however, began with the increasing self-consciousness of Latin Americans in the 1950s, and was completed by Vatican II when a degree of autonomy was returned to the national churches.[9] The very first sign of any autonomy in the Latin American church appeared in the theology of development. This theology, however, was by no means totally free from the problems of Christendom.

The theology of development (as written by Latin Americans)[10] organized the theme of 'modernization' into a Christian framework. An economic theory which became

popular among Latin American thinkers in the 1950s, the modernization process promised to lead Latin America into the same age of prosperity as the industrialized nations. The formal theme of modernization promoted an almost utopian belief that the process and prerequisites of development were identifiable. For example, the economic theories of W.A. Lewis, D. Seers, and W.W. Rostow et.al., described the Latin American economy and society as a less complete, retarded version of the high development to be found in the north Atlantic nations.[11] Successful development, they maintained, assumed certain functional prerequisites or necessary and sufficient conditions for development (i.e., take off platforms, import substitution, a need to industrialize, or a need to decrease population pressure). Modernization theory thrived on the promise that to achieve development men could implement these 'prerequisites', and countries would complete the present process of development which was floundering or blocked at an incomplete embryonic stage. The theologians of development took up this theme, blended it with Christian goals, and proposed a role for the church in the development scheme. They urged Christians to participate in 'boot strap' operations which sought to involve the populace in peaceful solutions to Latin America's problems. (This consciousness was coincident with the Peace Corp Program, President Kennedy's Alliance for Progress, and perhaps a response to

the successful Cuban revolution of 1959). The church became Christian Democratic in inspiration during the 1950s and 60s, culminating in 'Catholic Action' movements and the Frei government in Chile.[12] In the final instance the church supported the 'modernization' theories of social betterment, but rejected socialist theories which saw the socio-economic structures of capitalism as the sources of poverty and oppression.

But increasing poverty, unemployment and poverty crushed this developmentalist optimism. Hugo Assman, a leading theologian notes,

> The 1960s were a decade of successive frustrations for Latin America; the failure of the Alliance for Progress, the growing imperialist control of organizations supposed to be helping development (OEA, CEPAL, CIES, CIAP, BID, AID, and so on..) the impossibility of making even our most modest demands heard on the international scene (meetings of GATT, UNCTAD, CECLA, in 1969, and so forth), the militarization of the continent, (Brazil 1964) (Argentina 1966) (Uruguay 1970) (Bolivia 1970) and Chile in (1973). (13)

Given this oppressive political atmosphere, optimism about economic progress turned to criticism and suspicion. This contradiction between proposed progress and narrow, selective, repressive development gave birth to a critique of 'modernization' called dependency theory. Latin American dependency theorists rejected the technical process of modernization (and the implicit conceptual frameworks

found in the development theories of 'first' world economists).[14] Arguing that modernization, the lion that was to devour the world, was not working at all in some places or had worked in such a different way that it could be Christened another name, these theorists demonstrated that 'underdevelopment' was not a 'natural state' but a necessary result of fully developed capitalism.[15]

Likewise, some progressive Latin American theologians rejected modernization using arguments borrowed from independence theorists. Jose Migues Bonino, a distinguished Protestant theologian pointed out:

> The basic fallacy (of modernization) consisted in understanding and describing the rise to power and wealth of the North Atlantic countries as a moral achievement due to certain conditions of character and the principles of democracy, free enterprise, and education. [It also consisted of the assertion that] any country which would adopt these principles and acquire these qualities would naturally develop in the same way. (16)

Bonino considered these moral premises misleading, and questioned the kind of progress implied by the concept of development. Bonino noted, using the economic analysis of dependency theory,

> The rise of the northern countries took place at a particular time in history and was built upon the possibilities offered by the resources of dependent countries. Development and underdevelopment are not two stages in a continuum but two mutually related processes. Northern development is built upon third world underdevelopment. (17)

Therefore, liberation theologians christen the theology of development as a 'New Christendom' because of its heavy reliance upon modernization themes, and reject it for being pregnant with the alien cultural values and conceptual frameworks of first world economists. The most hypocritical of these values, wrote Jose Miguez Bonino, was the protection and promotion of 'modernization' by the use of repressive military force. He noted:

> Freedom and democracy were protected in the last stage of this process by their physical and ideological opposite, the repressive police state. The church, as a result of their allegiance to this liberal ideology to modernize, found themselves serving the interests of an inhumane structure. (18)

This moral contradiction shocked some theologians into rejecting development, and opting for the poor and oppressed. This 'option' became concretized in the political and theological theme of 'liberation'. Liberation, the central theme in 'liberation theology,'[19] gave a new definition to the relationship of politics and religious faith. From dependency theory,[20] liberation theologians acquired a set of economic and social categories which they carried over into their religious activities. And liberation theology, because of its new methodology, presented new possibilities for social action. For over a decade this rich tradition of theology has been unfolding in Latin America. Classical in its theoretical and methodolo-

gical roots, but drawing substantive focus from the urgent contemporary social and political problems of Latin America, this tradition is only beginning to be appreciated by North American theologians and social analysts. Liberation theology[21] is a uniquely Latin American theology, not just because it is written by Latinos, but because it is based upon the experience of being Christian and attempting to practise Christianity in Latin America under the peculiar social historical conditions of the last two decades.

Socio-historical elements play an important role not only in the genesis of liberation theology, but also in the method of "doing theology". Liberation theology takes the classic biblical idea[22] that theology is an interpretation of history, or an interpretation of what is going on in society in terms of our belief in God. This old, biblical style of theology contemplated the experience of history and occasioned an historical self-awareness. However, the biblical method of doing theology was lost with the rise of thomistic thinking.[23] In thomistic theology, method resembles a philosophical game; the theologians argue from a premise to a conclusion in the same manner as a mathematical theorem. These theologians cited history in an anti-historical or anecdotal fashion. The Greek concept of history as an endless cycle (moira) informed their theology and history played no causal role in 'doing theology'

because it was not 'once and for all.' The topics and concepts of thomistic theology became trans-historical and failed to address politically significant concerns.[24]

Liberation theology, however, returned the centrality of socio-historical awareness to Christian awareness. The theology of liberation was directly tied to experience, and brought theology into tension with the history of Latin America, a brutal history of dependence, exploitation, and oppression.[25] The experience of this history became the basis for making theological statements and for reflecting theologically upon the events in Latin America. Thus, Christian action became action in history because history was the key locus of thinking. Liberation, by the very nature of its method, developed a concrete link with history and through social praxis sought to come to grips with society in order to change the direction of history for the better.

THE GENESIS OF LIBERATION AS AN IDEAL

Positing history as a constituent element in theology is of particular interest to sociologists. One of the major concerns of social analysts is the relationship of intellectual ideas and historical trends. This active relationship of ideas and social conditions is the area of inquiry of the sociology of knowledge.[26] The sociology of

knowledge examines the dialectical relationship between theoretical knowledge (in our case theology) and the social cultural context of knowledge (the Latin American experience). A tepid sociology of knowledge which analyzes superficially would leave us with the empty knowledge that the theologies of liberation and thomism are reflections of their particular social contexts. But the key distinction between these theologies derives from thomism's failure to be conscious of history, whereas liberationists build upon the dialectic of theory and history. Self-consciousness, says Kurt Wolff (a noted scholar in the sociology of knowledge) completes the process of the sociology of knowledge by deriving the 'ought from the is.'[27] By building into the method of liberation theology this same self-criticism, liberationists can make claims about the direction of social change. In the early biblical way of thinking, theologians assessed the contradictions in society and provided new directions for the faithful. Resembling this moral duty found in classical theology, the moral thrust of liberation theology is the creation of a more just society.[28]

Starting with the primacy of history, liberationists refute the assertion that the theology of liberation is a simple outgrowth of European political theology,[29] and assert that the Latin American experience has given their theology an entirely new content and concern. The Nicaraguan theologian-

poet Ernesto Cardenal (who is presently the Minister of Culture in the Sandinista reconstruction government in Nicaragua) explains:

> The Theology of Liberation is not one more chapter of traditional theology invented recently in Latin America, as European theologians are accustomed to believe. Just as there is a theology of marriage, a theology of work, and so on, they suppose the theology of liberation is one more appendix of traditional theology applied now to the theme of revolution. It is not so. This is an entirely new theology, one that replaces in the light of the revolution all the topics of traditional theology: God, Christ, the Church, the priesthood, marriage, work: everything, in fact.
>
> This is a theology of the oppressed class, while the other is a theology of the dominant class. It is not practised by professional theologians for other professional theologians, as is the other. Instead it is usually the fruit of community reflection and is designed by men and women who belong to revolutionary communities. And it is for the use of these same communities. This theology is not usually carried on in books but in small magazines, simple leaflets, mimeoed sheets. And as Giulio Girardi points out (precisely in one of those mimeographed papers) whereas one theology is purely intellectual, the other cannot be followed if one is not committed to the practice of revolution. One theology was helped by a science (Marxism). One theology was based on the Word of God (in the Bible). The other is based on the Bible but also on the Word of God as expressed in current events and in the newspapers: in other words, on political ground. As Giulio Girardi, one of the theologians of liberation, makes plain, our God is a living God who continues speaking in history. He didn't suddenly stop talking after the last book of the Bible.
>
> This theology is based on the Bible but with a new interpretation of the Bible. That does not mean that we believe that the Bible can be interpreted as we please. But there is a

> revolutionary interpretation of the Scriptures just as there is a counter-revolutionary one. (30)

Similarly, when asked to speak of the history of liberation theology, the noted Protestant theologian Jose Miguez Bonino responded:

> How do you go about tracing the history of a theology? Usually you find the originators and the influences that played upon them, the precedents and the evolution of their thoughts and you must find a way of saying there is a first and second Gustavo Gutierrez and a younger and older Juan Luis Segundo and so on. You could do this with the theology of liberation....but I think that one would entirely miss the center of the process that way. What is the corpus and what do you have to use? Books, articles, etc. But what lies beyond them is more important.... to get at the real sources, you must move outside the field of proper and classical theology to the Christian communities and beyond that to Latin American secular history....I think that it is this history which makes it possible for us to speak of a theology of liberation. Otherwise, you would have to speak of many theologies of liberation. There is no homogeneous doctrinal school of theology, <u>but there is a common historical matrix--of this theology</u>. (31)

Likewise the theologian Juan Luis Segundo, emphasizing the role of history in the dialectical process of theologizing, has written:

> We began our theology of liberation simply by being sensitive to our own oppression. We in Latin America began to think about liberation before thinking about a theology of liberation. I can say that this human (not precisely Christian) sensitivity to the fact that our people are oppressed was the basis for a praxis of liberation. (32)

In summary, the method of liberation theology is an elaborate mechanism whereby new social and religious contexts give rise to new theological debates. This leads to reflection upon traditional scriptures which, in turn, leads to new religiously motivated activities. When these religious activities once again come into tension with the changing social context which created them, the process repeats itself. Thus, new theological knowledge is constantly created by the dialectical tension between being religious and living in an everchanging social context. The 'ought' derived from the 'is' in this process which liberationists call 'orthopraxis'.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF RELIGIOUS FAITH FOR SOCIAL ACTION

Orthopraxis stresses effective action in the world. As human action is the starting point of theological reflection, orthopraxis (as Christian activity towards changing the world) has implicit in it an image of man who creates himself as he transforms the world through his activities. This historical man of progress, who actualizes himself through struggle with nature (and society) stands in opposition to the transhistorical, generic essentialist man of enlightenment philosophy and thomistic theology.[33] But how does this historical man differ from Marx's homo faber? The difference is in the conception of history.

Liberationists reflect upon the meaning of history, not only in sociological and economic terms, but also in biblical categories. History becomes more than the passage of people, but the history of the work of God as he leads and enlightens his people. (As such, the biblical motif of Exodus is frequently cited as a symbol of the struggle for liberation in Latin America).

The gospel message, as the recorded work of God in history, must itself be interpreted historically says Jean Hornosty in her discussion of Uruguayan theologian Juan Luis Segundo:

> He (Segundo) rejects the idea of an immutable entity and instead maintains that God's plan 'acquires greater depth through insertion in history'. For Segundo, there is no one morality, one law, one universal 'present moment' which can be the guide for pastoral activity at all times, in all places. There is no atemporal absolute. Rather (insists Segundo) if faith is not to become mere ideology 'the creed must be verified on the level of real life experience'. That is to say, the reference points must always be found in life itself, in man's real existence. (34)

Therefore, in order to have an historically relevant theology, the liberationists integrate theory and praxis and reject the dual planes theory of history. (Traditional theology separated the sacred from the secular and created two separate realms of responsibility and accountability).[35] Thus, the liberationist Hugo Assman, argues that even faith

has political ramifications in this world and "the political dimension of faith is not something added to the normal content of faith, but the very act of faith in a particular historical context."[36] For liberationists this process is called liberation.

LIBERATION

The production, transmission, and revision of traditional theology took place in seminaries and suffered from all the liabilities of a closed system. (Usually the discourse took place in books and became out of touch with reality, especially in countries where the majority of the people were illiterate.) Of course political theology was an improvement upon this older movement, however, it responded only to the problem of secularism in Europe and was inappropriate for Latin Americans because it was culturally dominated by western concepts, needs, and solutions. Liberation theologians broke from these theological styles by introducing everyday life as a new source for theology.

In traditional theology people mastered a received body of knowledge and then drew implications for Christian behaviour out of that abstract philosophical reflection. Liberation theologians, although they stress theological reflection, work very carefully out of concrete situations. They bring their experiences in the world into tension with

the scriptural tradition and the experiences of other Christians. As this process takes place amongst the people the cumulative experiences of the students, campesinos, workers, and the poor augment the theologians' own experiences and are brought into the theological process. Therefore the locus of doing theology undergoes a shift from the seminary to the farmer's field. It remains theology, however, because of the way these experiences are brought into tension with the biblical Christology and because reflection upon this tension generates new religiously motivated activities. Theology is brought back into history and history back into theology so that a political stance becomes an integral part of one's faith, and faith is expressed most clearly in the theme of liberation.

In a Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation,[37] Gustavo Gutierrez considers liberation to be the true content of the term development. For him, liberation is not only a criticism of modernization but the positive proposal of 'new' directions and 'new' values for development. As such, liberationists do not confront the traditional problems of atheism, encroaching secularism, or indifference but challenge repressive social and political conditions. This emphasis upon changing the world differs markedly from political theology's emphasis upon reconciliation or getting in touch with the world. Thus

liberation theologians reject desarollismo for a theory of liberation. As Gutierrez writes,

> In the first place liberation expresses the aspirations of oppressed peoples and social classes, emphasizing the conflictual aspect of the economic, social, and political process which puts them at odds with wealthy nations and oppressive classes. In contrast, the word development, and above all the policies characterized as developmentalist (desarollista) appear somewhat aseptic, giving a false picture of a tragic and conflictual reality. (38)

In sum the term development is seen as problematic. The term, says Gutierrez, seemed tentatively to have synthesized the aspirations of the people for more humane living conditions.[39] Development, however, and its counterpart underdeveloped, were used by the modernization school in a manner which contained implications that foreclosed criticism of the issue. Beneath the notion of development used by desarollistas lurked the assumption that, once upon a time, all countries were underdeveloped. Thus by labelling a country 'underdeveloped' these theorists implied that the country was on the same trajectory as the developed countries. Consequently the presumption that underdevelopment was a natural state meant that no one was responsible for it. Taking this premise as a truism, modernization theorists built a theory of development which stressed certain necessary and sufficient conditions for progress (e.g., efficient bureaucracy, modern technology, industrial

expansion, increase in GNP, decrease in population growth rate, etc.). This causal model of development became the paradigm for theories of take-off prerequisites, obstacles to modernization, and comparative advantage theory. It was this kind of theory which Gutierrez rejected as unrealistic, asceptic, and even misleading. He wrote,

> Developmentalism thus came to be synonymous with reformism and modernization, that is to say, synonymous with timid measures, really ineffectual in the long run and counter-productive to achieving a real transformation. (40)

Gutierrez used the work of A.G. Frank and the dependency theorists to support his theological critique of desarollismo/ modernization theory. Gutierrez not only employed their theory that underdevelopment was a consequence of human action and not a natural state, but he expanded their purely economic critique by positing a positive model of development, development as a total social process. He noted,

> It is only for methodological convenience or in a partial sense that one can speak of economic, political, cultural, or social development. (41)

Gutierrez' theory of total growth is a moral strategy of development which takes into consideration the dependency factors, while seeking to advance a country's growth harmoniously in all directions. Describing this total process of development, Gutierrez wrote,

> (total development) implies some ethical dimension, which presupposes a concern for human values....this humanistic approach (converging viewpoints are found in Marxist inspired positions)[42] places the notion of development in a wider context: a historical vision in which man assumes his own destiny...and this leads to a change of perspective which is called liberation. (43)

In sum, the theory of liberation rejects modernization theory (desarollismo) and promotes a total development process (economic, social, moral and psychological).

At the second level of meaning, the term liberation is applied to an understanding of history. Gutierrez's task at this level is profound. He defines human existence and its historical future as a struggle by man to liberate himself from "all that limits and keeps man from self-fulfillment, liberation from all impediments to the exercise of freedom."[44] At first glance this appears a flighty theological assertion which lacks a possibility of realization. If the language is amorphous and hollow, the logic is not. He finds discontent in the world not only on the protest against poverty in the underdeveloped countries, but more significantly, in the protest against wealth in the developed nations. Giving "protest" a universal context, he highlights oppression as a global phenomena and gives 'poverty' not only an economic dimension but also a psychological dimension. Consequently, liberation becomes not only freedom from external constraints in the market-

place but also an interior liberation on the personal and psychological planes. Thus Gutierrez establishes that liberation is neither wholly psychological nor wholly economic.

Liberation is a goal for men in both developed and underdeveloped areas because the "goal is not only better living conditions or a radical change of structures, or a social revolution, it is much more, it is the continuous creation, never ending, of a new way to be man, a permanent cultural revolution."[45] Conceiving of history as a process of liberation for man Gutierrez considers freedom an historical conquest. He notes,

> History is not the development of potentialities pre-existent in man; it is the conquest of qualitatively different ways of being man ....Man is seen as assuming conscious responsibility for his own destiny. (46)

This second level of the term liberation builds upon the initial criticism of development as underdevelopment. The addition of the historical element explains how man comes to grips with the concept of freedom through rationality.

Only at the third level of the term liberation does Tutierrez introduce the theological concept of sin. It is best summarized in this quote:

> In describing sin as the ultimate cause, we do not in any way negate the structural reasons and the objective determinants leading to these situations. It does, however, emphasize the fact that things do not happen by chance and that behind an unjust structure there is a personal or collective

> will responsible...a willingness to reject God and neighbour. It suggests, likewise, that a social[47] transformation, no matter how radical it may be, does not automatically achieve the suppression of all evils.

But the blend of sociological analysis and theological reasoning is unmistakable. At this conjuncture the believer, inspired by the biblical edicts against sin, acts in history (level 2) against the injustice discovered in level 1. Gutierrez sees the three levels of meaning as acting in a complex, never ending process which avoids two pitfalls; first the criticism that spiritualist approaches are nothing but ways of avoiding a harsh reality (the usual criticism leveled against the 'aroma' of religious politics), and second, the criticism that these programs are short term and initiated under the pretext of meeting immediate needs (i.e., symptoms, not causes). Liberation provides a much more complex and effective aim than development because it expresses an aspiration to construct a totally just and fraternal society.

The classical critics of religion argued that it was apolitical because of its eschatological orientation to the 'other world'. But the complex nature of the term liberation short-circuits this criticism because it is critical of this world (both in its criticism of modernization and its concern for justice in this world). Methodologically, it starts with the concepts, liberation from what, liberation for what, liberation to what, while remaining conscious

of itself as a theology existing in an underdeveloped world. Liberation becomes for Gutierrez, a model for a just and rational society based upon some very old Christian values that are given a new meaning in the conflictual economic, social, and economic processes of Latin America. As Gutierrez explains,

> Dependence and liberation are correlative terms. An analysis of the situation of dependence leads one to attempt to escape. But at the same time participation in the process of liberation allows one to acquire a more concrete living awareness of this situation of domination, to perceive its intensity, and to want to understand better its mechanisms. This participation likewise highlights the profound aspirations which play a part in the struggle for a more just society. (48)

This contrast of liberation and development is not merely a criticism of the content of development but a proposal for a new content, liberation.

MEDELLIN TO PUEBLA

Liberation theology became widely known after the bishops' conference at Medellin, Colombia in 1968.[49] The theme of 'liberation' caused great controversy in the Latin American church between 1968 and the next bishops' conference at Puebla, Mexico in 1979. The bishops at Medellin urged new types of social action consolidated upon the themes of liberation theology. But at Puebla,

despite ratifying again the 'option for the poor' and the 'base de communidade' concepts from Medellin, the conservative bishops also opened rifts between themselves and those more progressive clergy who lived the Medellin documents. As such, the Puebla conference[50] offered evidence not only of the prevalence of the theme of 'liberation', but also demonstrated the persistence of the split between conservative 'realistic' clergy and the more radical 'mystical' priests.

Medellin marked the re-evaluation of the church's social policies during the 'modernization' era. The church prior to Medellin had sponsored movements of Christian inspiration, cooperatives, trade unions, even political parties. However, these movements for justice were deemed too slow and reformist by the more progressive clergy. They felt the church's doctrine was too ahistorical, abstract or static, and too heavily identified with the Christian democrats (whose priorities they considered pro-capitalist). As a result of the pressing needs of Latin American society, the progressive clergy found the theology of liberation and the ideals of Medellin appealing. As Gerhard Drekonja, a scholar of the Latin American church points out,

> The central working document for the Latin American bishops' conference which met in the summer of 1968 in the industrial city of Medellin, after the Eurcharistic Conference

> in Bogota, mentioned in its introduction, neither pastoral nor theological questions. It began with a manner of fact analysis of Latin American reality, discussed the underdevelopment of the subcontinent in sociological terms, and demanded finally a commitment from the church to the social problems of hunger and misery, which the document stated are the urgent questions upon whose solution the future Latin America depends. (51)

The Medellin conference introduced three new revolutionary themes from liberation theology into the documents. The first theme of institutionalized sin and institutionalized violence established that social, economic, and political structures, not individuals, were the sources of violence. The second theme of 'poverty' as a social sin argued that poverty was not a natural state but a result of social causes and contrary to social dignity. The third theme, the preferential option for the poor, committed the church to a positive stand against injustice.[52] These three themes were actualized through pastoral action and the raising of awareness about injustice (conscientizacion).[53]

In sum, Medellin started from the same inspirational ground as liberation theology, the brutal reality of everyday life in Latin America. The bishops sanctioned some provocative concepts such as 'institutionalized sin' and 'liberation', which have become the inspiration, orientation and legitimation for religious activities since 1968. Although Medellin spoke out aggressively against 'institutionalized violence', it did not go so far as to approve

violence as a means to overthrow oppressive structures. Nevertheless the importance of Medellin goes far beyond its documented postures. The documents have been used by some religious to justify violence. As such Medellin is a symbol constantly referred to of an historical change in the church's attitude towards poverty, its causes, and its cures. Of course this position paper has not been acted upon by the whole Latin American church (on the contrary, it is often quoted but not acted upon by the most conservative bishops in their pastorals). Nevertheless these documents have become a blessing upon, and a reference point for the more creative progressive movements of the church. In the last ten-year period they have given rise to the growth of grassroots communities (communidades de base), groups of radical clergy (Golconda in Colombia, Onis in Peru, Christians for Socialism in Chile, worker priests in Argentina), and provided an ideology of change in liberation theology.[54]

The power of Medellin is, in part, symbolic power, a symbol of the optimism which reigned in the 1960s. Moreover, the Medellin documents became elevated as sacred symbols because they promised some hope even after the crushing political events which followed Medellin (namely the overthrow of J.J. Torres and the rise of Hugo Banzer in Bolivia in 1971, the demise of the Frente Amplio in Uruguay in 1973, the coup in Chile in 1973, the imposition

of military government in Peru in 1976, military takeover in Argentina in 1976 and general increasing repression in Central America).

In the years between Medellin and Puebla the church's commitment to social justice brought it more and more in conflict with repressive regimes (especially in the defence of human rights). This opposition was sometimes only token, (or when it was effective opposition, it was carried on by only individual priests or groups and not the whole church). Nevertheless, it remains a significant point that in 1969 the Rockefeller Report on the Americas[55] said the church could no longer be relied upon as pro-American because the rift between the progressive and reactionary clergy made the church's allegiances suspect and fractured. The report urged instead the strengthening of military regimes.

The conflict between progressive and conservative clergy erupted at the third episcopal meeting of bishops at Puebla, Mexico in 1979. Philip Berryman in the article "'What Happened at Puebla?' interpreted this meeting as a clash, or better, the manifestation of an ongoing clash within the church in Latin America, a theological and pastoral conflict with political significance." Berryman distinguished between three groups or tendencies among the bishops which will prove useful throughout our work. He identified conservatives, liberationists, and centrists, based on their opinions of the role of the church in the

world, and on internal church issues.

> Conservatives: Their image of the Church emphasizes the hierarchy and cultic and doctrinal elements. They would like to correct what they see as doctrinal errors and attempt to set up a teaching authority in rivalry to the bishops on the part of liberation theologians and members of religious orders ("parallel magisterium"). They have typically been silent in the face of repression, whether through fear of conflict with governments or out of anticommunist sentiment.
>
> Liberationists: This group's vision of the Church is centered on the poor and on communidades de base (CEBs), and the hierarchy is seen in a serving role. Emphasis is placed on the ethical elements of Christianity. Liberationists tend to criticize not simply "abuses" such as torture, but current development models themselves, and to call for systemic change. Social programs are focused on leadership training and organization.
>
> Center: This group occupies a middle ground and is most concerned about the unity of the Church. With the conservatives it emphasizes hierarchical authority and with the liberationists it sees the need to defend human rights, at least in extreme situations. Its theological views tend to reflect Vatican Council II, e.g., stressing change is (implicitly at least) more reformist than revolutionary, e.g., promoting development projects. (57)

In analyzing these types of priests, Berryman explodes the myth that the conservatives are more 'religious' and the progressive clergy more 'political' when he suggests that the distinction is "not a matter of religion vs. politics, but of how faith and politics are seen and lived."[58] The

bishops at Puebla continued to agree on 'the preferential option for the poor' but disagreed on what kinds of activities they would take to promote the poor. Indeed some bishops worked to depoliticize the 'option for the poor'. In many ways the hierarchy had begun to realize the implications of Medellin and the ways the more radical clergy were using the documents to legitimate their 'political' activities. The adversarial position taken by the CELEM hierarchy[59] and the Rockefeller report towards the clergy who espoused liberationist themes demonstrates the increasing rift within the church. Identifying this disjunction will help us understand more clearly why the Nicaraguan bishops were torn between defending torture, genocide, and military violence and promoting deep structural change in society. In sum, this rift was not peculiar to Nicaragua but pervaded the entire church in Latin America.

The genesis of liberation theology was exploitation and dependence. Dependence took the forms of economic dependence (the external control of the marketplace), cultural dependence (the importation of a system of symbols, signs, and ideas), and religious dependence (whereby orientations to God came from the Vatican and were alien to Latin Americans). The theology of liberation, using the social sciences to analyze the causes of domination, began to elaborate a system that countered those that dominated the continent. Calling for the reform of the

society, and rebuking the ethical poverty of 'modernization', some clergy began to actualize the preferential option for the poor by forming community groups (base de communidades).[60] But why call critical reflection on historical experience 'theology' when sociology, history, and economics do similar things? For two reasons. First, no theology has 'fallen from heaven' free of social and political assumptions about the nature of God's relationship to men in this world. Thus the use or awareness of social and political factors is merely an explicit use and not a new departure for theologians. Second, liberation theology does rely on a Christology (a logos about God) which it brings into tension with the social sciences. This cross-fertilization of religious Christology with social analysis makes the theology of liberation unique but nevertheless a theology. As Jose Comblin says of liberation theology, it is perhaps not a very good theology in terms of accurate statements and definitive exegesis of the tomes, but it deals with the decisive problems of the time, and therefore is the right theology.

Footnotes

1. These are fully discussed in A. Dulles, Models of the Church (New York, Doubleday), 1974. Dulles establishes that there are five different models of which the church as institution and the church as pilgrim people of God appear most appropriate for our work. For the political implications of these models see D. Levine and Wilde, The Catholic Church, Politics & Violence: The Colombian Case. The Review of Politics 39:2 (April 1977) 220-239.

2. Enrique Dussel in History and the Theology of Liberation pp. 79-109, Orbis Books, N.Y. 1976, offers an excellent insight into the prophetic martyrs of early Christendom. The Nicaraguan Bishop Antonio de Valdevisio provides an interesting precedent for our study (96).

3. Jose Comblin, The Church and the National Security State, Orbis Books, N.Y., 1979. See especially Chapter Three: Understanding the Present Condition of the Catholic Church in Latin America.

4. Max Weber, Sociology of Religion, trans. Ephraem Fischoff, Intro.: Talcott Parsons. Boston, Beacon Press, 1964, p. 46. This contrast of priest and prophet stems from (in short) Weber's concern for, and contrast of, the increase of "rationalization and bureaucratization" vs. the charismatic.

5. Op.cit., Enrique Dussel, p. 18.

6. This theme is widely discussed and criticized, see "The Ideology of Developmentalism American Political Sciences Paradigm/Surrogate for Latin American Studies." Berkeley Journal of Sociology 1970, 95-137.

7. Dussel argues that Christendom subsumed Christianity, making it part of the colonial process such that those who opposed abuses of the process of colonization were criticized for being anti-Christian and expelled for heresy.

8. Dussel, op.cit., p. 18.

9. For a discussion of Vatican II see Thomas O'Dea, The Catholic Crisis, Beacon Press, Boston, 1968, Chapter 4.

10. For a discussion of this theology as it pertains to Latin America see Francois Houtart & Andre Roussea, The Church and Revolution, translated by Violet Neville, New York, Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1971.

11. See bibliography.

12. For Catholic action see footnotes #4 in introduction. For discussion of Chile see Brian Smith footnote #59. For Nicaragua and the Christian Democratic party see Thomas Walker, The Christian Democratic Movement in Nicaragua, University of Arizona.

13. Hugo Assman, Practical Theology of Liberation, Introduction by Gustavo Gutierrez; Preface by Ernesto Cardenal, London Search Press, 1975 (original Spanish text Ediciones Sigueme, 1973), p. 49. Assman's summary history does not claim exhaustiveness but seeks to elucidate the salient themes which concerned Latin Americans and Latin American theologians.

14. R. Chilcote, The Struggle with Dependency & Beyond. Cambridge: Schenkman Publ., 1974. See Introduction. See also J. Kahl, Modernization, Exploitation, and Dependency, Transaction Books, 1976.

15. See for example Andre Gunder Frank, Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America, revised edition, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1969.

16. Jose Miguez Bonino, Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation. Confrontation Books, Fortress Press, 1975, p. 15.

17. Ibid., p. 16.

18. Ibid., p. 17.

19. There is a vast literature on liberation theology. The reader will find an indication of bibliographic material in this thesis bibliography. For a good start try Phillip Berryman, "Latin American Liberation Theology", in Theological Studies, Vol. 34, 1973.

20. For a discussion of the use and abuse of dependency theory by liberationists see Michael Dodson, "Liberation Theology and Christian Radicalism", Journal of Latin American Studies, II-I, pp. 203-222, 1979.

21. See S. Torres & J. Eagleson, Theology in the Americas (ed.), New York, Orbis Books, 1976, pp. 263-309.

22. Alistar Kee (ed.), A Reader in Political Theology SCM Press, 1974. Preface, p. 1.

23. The New Catholic Encyclopedia provides an excellent survey of this paradigmatic way of thinking.

24. On the issue of thought being neutral (a major claim of thomism) the liberation theologians claim that all theological thought is partisan and proclaimed neutrality is nothing more than ideological deception. Their "Theology of Theology" resembles the Sociology of Sociology of Dusky Lee Smith (see Towards a Sociology of Happiness: The Sunshine Boys in L. Reynolds and J. Reynolds, The Sociology of Sociology, New York, McKay Books, 1970. Liberation theology begins with the premise that faith has a political dimension and that theology must be concerned with the historical reality of men's actions in transforming the world. At this point of awareness liberationists make a conscious concrete choice to liberate the poor and the oppressed. Gutierrez writes,

> The poor are a by product of the system in which we live and for which we are responsible...They are the oppressed, the exploited, the workers cheated of the fruits of their work and stripped of their being as men. The poverty of the poor is not an appeal for generous action to relieve it, but a demand for the construction of a different social order. Gutierrez, op.cit., p. 7.

This theology with a social purpose resembles the sociology of the early masters, Comte, Marx and Saint Simone who set out to resolve the social problems generated by the transitions following the agricultural and industrial revolutions. See for example, R. Nisbet, The Sociological Tradition, Basic Books, New York, 1966.

25. Liberation theology takes as its starting point dominated Latin America. This view of history is a relatively new one. A similar genesis in sociology is traced by Joseph Kahl (ft. #14). The theology of liberation is paralleled and linked to the sociology of liberation in Latin America. Both spring from a new consciousness of the historical roots of Latin America. For a good example of history with a Latin American consciousness see Eduardo Galeano, Open Veins of Latin America, Monthly Review Press, 1973.

26. Karl Mannheim, Ideology and Utopia, New York Harvest Books, 1936. See section 5, pp. 264-313.

27. See Kurt Wolff, "The Sociology of Knowledge and Sociological Theory" in Symposium on Sociological Theory, ed. Llewellyn Gross. Harper & Row, Inc., 1959, note especially his discussion of social historical reality and existential truth. For further discussion see Wolff's the "Cunning of reason in our times" in Parxis, Vol. 6.

28. This way of thinking about the purpose of theology is exactly the prime focus of the sociology of dependence as written by Latin Americans.

29. European political theology arose after Vatican II as a response to the problem of increasing secularization in society and the "death of God". It offered a new language and new symbols for speaking with the post-industrial society. The church wanted to revitalize itself, having lost its traditional roots, and attempted to present the church as once again as a sign of hope for the people of secular society. The most notable political theologians, Moltmann, Metz and Rahner, develop the theme of hope in history.

30. Ernesto Cardenal in the preface to Hugo Assman's, Practical Theology of Liberation, op.cit., p. 3.

31. Jose Miguez Bonino, in Theology in the Americas, op. cit., pp. 275-276.

32. Juan Luis Segundo, in Theology in the Americas, op.cit., p. 280.

33. For a discussion of essentialist man and historical man see Roy Hornosty, The Concept of Human Nature in Sociological Theory, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, SUNY, Buffalo, New York.

34. Jeannie Hornosty, The Contemporary Marxist Christian Dialogue: A Study in the Political Economy of Religion with Special Reference to Quebec, an unpublished Ph.D. thesis in Social Political Thought, York University, 1979.

35. Gustavo Gutierrez argues that the distinction of planes theory which separates the sacred from the secular has implicit in it a political position. He notes,

> Is the church filfilling a purely religious role when by its silence or friendly relationships, it lends legitimacy to a dictatorial and oppressive government? We discover...that the policy of nonintervention in political affairs holds for certain actions which involve ecclesiastical authorities but not for others. In other words, it is not applied when it is a question of maintaining the status quo, but is wielded when, for example, a lay apostolic movement or group of priests holds an attitude considered subversive to the established order. Concretely, in Latin America, the distinction of planes model has the effect of concealing the real political option of a larger sector of the church, that is, support of the established order. The dominant groups who have always used the church to defend their interests and maintain their privileged position, today--as they see "suversive" tendencies gaining ground in the heart of the Christian community--call for a return to the purely religious and spiritual functions of the church.

36. Op.cit., H. Assman, p. 34.

37. Gustavo Gutierrez, The Theology of Liberation, New York, Orbis Books, 1973.

38. Ibid., p. 38.

39. Ibid., p. 22.

40. Ibid., p. 26.

41. Ibid., p. 38, footnote #9.

42. Ibid., p. 18, footnote #33.

43. Ibid., p. 25.

44. Ibid., p. 27.

45. Ibid., p. 32.

46. Ibid., pp. 32-36.

47. Ibid., p. 35. As Brian Smith, a Jesuit Priest working in Chile and the author of numerous socioreligious works on liberation theology and the church in Latin

America has noted in Smith,

> Sin in these theological writings is understood in a more collective sense than in the past, assuming a social form in injust social structures, exploitation of the poor, and the domination of one class by another. Salvation in such a context involves and even requires social action to liberate the oppressed and real Christian love is interpreted as sometimes sanctioning class conflict and organizing the poor for effective social action. (1975)

48. Op.cit., Gutierrez, p. 81.

49. For the documents of Medellin see "The church in the present day transformation of Latin America in the light of the council" in Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops. Bogota, Colombia: General Secretariat of the Consejo Episcopal Latino Americano 1970.

50. For documents and discussion of the Puebla Conference see Puebla and Beyond, Documentation and Commentary edited by John Eagleson and Philip Scharper. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1979.

51. Gerhard Drekonja, "Religion and Social Change in Latin America, Latin American Research Review, VI, Spring 1971, pp. 53-72.

52. See Medellin Documents, op.cit., sections 2 and 7 on Peace and sections 1,4, and 7 on justice.

53. See Paulo Friere, The Pedagogy of the Oppressed, New York, Seabury Press, 1970. This process of acquiring critical knowledge sought to make the masses aware of their ability to contribute to the creation of a new society as subjects, producers and citizens.

54. For ONIS, see M.H. Mooney, The Role of the Church in Peruvian Political Development, M.A. Thesis, University of Windsor 1976. For Golconda: Levine, D. and A. Wilde, The Catholic Church, Politics and Violence: The Colombian Case, The Review of Politics Vol. 39, pp. 220-249. For Argentina: Dodson, M., "Religious Innovation and the Politics of Argentina. A study of priests for the third world", Ph.D. Thesis, Indiana University, 1971. For Chile, Brian Smith and T. Sanders, "The Chilean Catholic Church During Allende and Pinochet Regimes", American Universities Filed Staff.

55. The Rockefeller Report on the Americas, New York Times editors, Chicago, Quadrangle Press, 1969. See also Lernoux, P. and Winiarski, M. 1979. "CIA ordered to survey Latin American Church", National Catholic Reporter, 15 February 16, 1979, p. 48.

56. P. Berryman, "What Happened at Puebla?", in Levine (ed.) op.cit.

57. Ibid., p. 56.

58. Ibid., p. 57.

59. The CELAM hierarchy is anti-liberationist in viewpoint. Berryman discusses their orientation in ibid., p. 59.

60. See T. Bruneau, "Basic Christian Communities", in Levine (ed.) Churches and Politics, op.cit., chapter 9.

CHAPTER III

THE POLITICAL HISTORY OF AN OTHER WORLDLY INSTITUTION: THE CHURCH AND STATE IN NICARAGUA, 1821-1967

Well known as one of the Banana Republics, Nicaragua has recently become famous or infamous for its popular revolution of 1978-79. The republic of Nicaragua occupies part of the isthmus which joins North and South America, and with an area of over 139,000 square kilometers, equals England in size. The country has both an Atlantic and Pacific coastline and borders on the south with Costa Rica and in the north with Honduras. A fertile land, naturally rich and self-supporting in agriculture, this land suffers no over-population* problem and no typical 'third world' problems such as a lack of resources, poor soil, or harsh climate. Despite these natural physical advantages, the peoples of Nicaragua suffered from every conceivable social and economic disadvantage.

These problems did not fall from Heaven but were coincident with the rule of the Somoza family from 1936-79. The effect of forty years of dictatorial rule by this family

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*2.5 million, density.

led 'Nicaraguans' to declare that Somoza was "not president of a country but owner of a hacienda." The Somoza dynasty* syphoned off resources, exploited the economy, and directly controlled over 40% of the private industrial sector. Today Nicaragua lacks roads, schools, and hospitals, but they are missing, not because the people didn't want them, but because Somoza didn't want them. The cruel, cartoon-like caricature of the banana republic's dictator, his puppet-like government, his repressive army, and his control over the masses describes the reality of Somoza's Nicaragua.

To clarify the role the Catholic Church played in the Nicaraguan revolution, we must understand the history of church state relations in Nicaragua preceding and during the Somoza dynasty. As we shall see, these relations would alter greatly during the rule of Anastasio Zomoza Debayle (1967-79) and contribute not only to the end of his power but also to the birth of a new nation, and a new church.

In Central America during the hundred years following independence from Spain in 1821, the Catholic Church suffered an abrupt curtailment of its power, wealth, and influence at the hands of liberal reformists. Although this curtailment of power and redefinition of church-state

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*Somoza I--1936-56; Somoza II--1958-68; Somoza III--1968-79
| | |
Father Eldest Son Youngest Son

relations took place throughout Latin America, the liberal reforms endured longer and were most severe in Central America.[1] Despite this repression, the Church in Central America, including Nicaragua, remained supportive of the status quo, except for some minor instances where the church defended the masses. In this chapter we will trace the history of the Catholic Church in Central America and Nicaragua (often inseparable) during this cycle of repression and quiescence. This work takes us from colonialism through independence, and to the rise of Somoza I, Anastasio Tacho Somoza.

For all practical purposes the Spanish consolidated the conquest of Central America by 1545.[2] These conquistadores, along with the clergy of the Roman Catholic Church, began to introduce the religion and the institutions of Europe to the 'New World'. Not only did the Crown of Spain fill the new clerical and administrative posts during the colonial era with Spaniards, the Spanish monarch also made all key political and clerical appointments, including those of the Bishops. The U.S. state department Handbook on Nicaragua reports that: "This ability to regulate religion became a very useful element in (the Spanish crown's) political authority; thus, the Church's prominent position in colonial Central America was, to a great extent, dependent upon the Spanish Crown.[3] Enrique Dussel, a church historian and curator of the Church Archives in Mexico City

writes:

> (The church was) subdued by the Patronato and turned into an institution dominated by the absolute monarchical state. The crown would not tolerate prophetic political criticism from the church. The head of Spanish Christendom was the King. The monarchy, the first modern European nation state, semi-feudal and semi-mercantile and, after the discovery of America predominantly commercial, was to be the nucleus and center of a state which organized the Christendom of the Indies. (4)

In this stage of conquest, we find a complicity between the politics of the Crown and the Church, with the Church by and large legitimating the colonization of the indigenous peoples.

The Church gradually began to organize this new peripheral state and evangelize the masses in Central America. Discovery of the Aztec civilization by Cortez in 1519 allowed the Church to plug the evangelization process into a highly structured society. The sophisticated and intelligent social structure of the original society provided a solid network for this process. Taking advantage of these mature social structures, the Church established evangelical centers in Mexico City and Lima, Peru,* accomplishing the early evangelical goals of their missionary

*Lima was created as a port for the Spanish fleet and not an original part of Inca Empire. The Inca capital of Cuzco was replaced by Lima as the center of commerce and government under the Spaniards.

endeavours by 1551.[5]

Besides introducing a new religious tradition, these colonialists built a new mode of production upon the social formations of the Amerindians. This system, called the encomienda, comprised a system of tribute with a monetary economy, which apportioned the Indians to masters and established a social relation of production between master (patron) and Indian (client).[6] (Central America, at this time, was known as the Vice-Regal Territory of Guatemala, a social formation of complex bureaucratic nature, ruled through the Council of the Indies, and basically an extension of the mercantilist state of Spain.) The Church, except for some exceptional bishops[7] and priests who defended the Indians, complied with the encomienda system. In general, the clergy themselves came from the class of the encomenderos and the Church soon became an economic and political power due to their large land holdings. Historians present two conceptualizations of the Church during the colonial period of Central America. In the former and most widely held view, historians argue that the Church supported the encomienda system, shared power with the conquistadores and commercial classes based on extensive land holdings and political influence, and legitimated the colonization of the Amerindians in the name of Christ and King.[8] In the latter view, some historians, although fully recognizing these qualities of the colonial Church, present evidence of a

minority movement which actively defended the human rights of the Amerindians in the name of Christianity[9] against the "colonial mentality"* of the conquistadores. In general, however, Christianity tended to identify itself with the Spanish civilization which it accompanied to the Americas and reaped the economic and political fruits of this alliance well into the eighteen hundreds.

Upon attaining independence in the early 1800s (1808-21) the nations of Latin America did not immediately question the traditional church and state relationship as it existed under the Spanish Empire.[10] The revolt from Spanish rule was not a people's revolt, but a revolt by the Creole commercial class to free themselves from Spanish domination. (Napoleon's invasion of Spain in 1808 weakened the control of the center upon the New World and in part contributed to these independence movements.) As Mario Rodriquez explains in his history of Central America,[11] the motto of the newly independent Central American Republics, "God, Union and Liberty", reflected the high favour in which the Church was held during the independence process. The clergy** actually played an important role in promoting the

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*Colonial mentality: saw Indians as brutal primitives and unable to achieve true Christian status regardless of conversion to Christianity.

**In Nicaragua, Bishop Nicolas Garcia Jerez, actively promoted separation from Spain and aligned himself with the Creole class even though he himself was considered a Conservative.

independence struggles, culminating with their participation in drawing up the constitution of 1824. Catholic conservatism even provided the ideological framework for the new state constitution. This constitution 'created' a loose federation of states called the Federal Republic of Central America in which Roman Catholicism became the state religion.[12]

The honeymoon between these states was short-lived; the Federacion began disaggregating almost immediately from "Provicias Unidas de America Central" to Estados Federados. They converted finally into five separate republics: Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Costa Rica in 1838. During the struggles for independence from Spain and moreso during the disaggregation into separate republics, two opinions about the Church emerged in the political forum. The conservatives or Serviles argued for a central form of government which retained the rights and privileges of the clergy. The liberals, however, wanted a federalist government which would abolish clerical rights and introduce clerical reforms.[13]

These struggles between Conservatives (Serviles) and Liberals persisted throughout the next era of Central American church-state relations. The Liberals, over the period from 1824-1929, eventually won this struggle, and their dominance diminished the Church's economic power and political influence, and relegated the Church to purely

'spiritual' concerns.[14]

These Latin American Liberals defined liberalism differently than Europeans and North Americans. Whereas European liberals called for a separation of the sphere of church and state responsibility, based on a platform of autonomy and mutual tolerance, and North Americans sought to separate religion from politics, Latin American liberals persecuted and plundered the Church. Jose Comblin, in The Church and the National Security Problem contends that:

> Liberalism in Latin America means control of the church by the state and its reduction to a mere religious function for the poor people of the haciendas. Free thinking is reserved for the upper classes, but religion is regarded as necessary for women and the poor. The liberals intend to limit and control religion, but they do not give up its social influence. Therefore they attempt to form clergy submissive and linked to the urban dominating classes and they succeeded almost completely. (15)

The attacks of liberals against the Church were especially severe in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras during the 1870s. The Nicaraguan Church would not suffer these same attacks by liberals until the regime of Santos Zelayo commenced in 1894.[16]

The opposing interests of Conservatives and Liberals were more than mere ideological struggles. Each 'elite' had particular economic interests in the newly liberated colonies. As Dussel notes:

> From 1850 the new State took shape as a liberal, dependent neo-colonial state... The conservative class of big-scale land owners exported exotic produce or goods needed by industry (to Britain and U.S.A.); the new liberal class imported and commercialized the products of the center. The ideology of liberty in the new state consisted in the freedom to sell the products of the new empire which had replaced the old. (17)

The Church sought to find a niche in this new state. Dussel notes, in general, that:

> The church established accommodating relations. Accepted by the conservatives, because it too was a land owner until well into the 19th century, it was in open conflict with liberalism. Paradoxically it supported the aims of self-reliance and liberation from the power of England and North America...Being nationalist and Catholic the Church supported opposition to imperialism, nevertheless because it was conservative it would not favour industrialization. What is certain is that it lost influence in the liberal state and was violently plundered and persecuted. (18)

Although the liberals lashed out against the Church their opposition was never directed toward the Roman Catholic religion per se. Instead liberals opposed the political organization of the Church in Central America. These anti-clericals did not want to reform the spiritual teachings of the Church or substitute a new dogma.[19] They opposed clerical wealth because it sustained the conservative party who were their political and economic rivals. As such the liberals also opposed the Church owning large tracts of land because it limited liberal entrepreneurial

opportunities. Yet the liberals supported religion because of its influence over the peasants. Thus the liberals restrained the Church's economic power but enlisted their ideological power. Because the split in political allegiances was vertical rather than horizontal, the voice of the masses was invariably excluded from the political arena. When popular movements arose the conservatives and liberals forgot their differences and united to deal with it as a united front. This is most notable in the Sandino Affair of 1920s in which the Church sided with the government.[20]

In Central America the fortunes of the Church's ideological power rose and fell with the fortunes of the conservative class and party. The eclipse, then, of the conservatives by liberal reformers in the 1870s brought with it a decline in economic and ideological power of the Church. We will turn now to a more detailed look at the liberal reforms and their effect upon the Church in Central America and Nicaragua.

The real rupture between the Church and state in Central America began during the age of liberalism (1825-1929). Initially the modern states of Costa Rica, Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Honduras were united by the liberals into a loose federation known as Unionism.[21] Throughout the experiment with Unionism (1826-40) the

liberals set out to abolish Church privileges by passing laws requiring that episcopal letters be approved by civil government and reducing by half the tithes which supported the churches. This anti-clerical program of the liberals met immediate resistance. Manuel Arce, the president of the federation (and himself a liberal anti-clerical) attempted to avoid alienating the Serviles (the conservative supporters of the bishopric) by curbing anti-clericalism.[22] As a result of Arce's intervention, the conservatives redominated the political scene in Guatemala and began, in turn, to repress liberalism with a 'Middle Ages' fervor.[23]

However, a revolution led by Francisco Morazan in 1829 returned the liberals to power. Morazan convinced the liberals that the power of the Church, and especially the bishops in Guatemala, had to be eliminated. During his decade of power, Morazan introduced laws which abolished monasteries, expropriated church territories, exiled the Archbishop, and declared marriage a civil contract.[24] Some of the anti-clerical laws introduced by Morazan, especially those laws secularizing marriage and divorce, were not well received by the fervently religious people of Central America. In 1838 public pressure grew against Morazan and he was overthrown in a popular revolt incited by the clerics in 1839. His replacement as president was Raphael Carrera, a supposedly illiterate Indian, and agent

of the clerics. At the height of this subversion (in March of 1839) the Federation of Central American States was dissolved.[25]

In the course of Carrera's reign (1839-65) the reforms against the Church were abrogated and the Church was restored to its original status. Although the federation no longer formally existed, Carrera, as president of Guatemala, exercised considerable influence over the other states. He played an instrumental role in negotiating concordats between the Vatican and the other Central American states.[26] Evincing this influence, the Nicaraguan government signed a concordat with the Vatican in 1862 outlining church-state relations, and providing state support for the Church.[27]

The breakup of the federation had, however, resulted in the resurgence of internal liberal-conservative struggles at a national level. In Nicaragua these two factions operated from the different geographical centers of Granada (conservatives) and Leon (the liberals) and their rivalry was bitter. As in all Central American countries, the interests of the Church rested with the conservative party.[28] The Nicaraguan conservatives dominated this sharp political contest with the liberals until 1893. The conservatives, and consequently the church, faired less well throughout the rest of Central America. Indeed, by 1871 all the republics were liberal with the exception of Nicaragua.

Not that Nicaragua was without its liberal-conservative struggles. Nicaragua experienced four failed attempts by the liberals to ascend to power before 1870. One of the most famous attempts was led by William Walker, the American adventurer. In a two year war known as the Filibuster War, Walker took the presidency of Nicaragua for himself and attempted to unite the five Central American republics by force of arms.[29] Walker was defeated in 1857, and the liberals were disgraced because of their initial association with his invasion. Thus, as a result of the discrediting of the liberals, the conservatives of Nicaragua began thirty-five years of uninterrupted rule. As the Central American historian Mario Rodgriguez writes, "While Nicaragua enjoyed a Conservative siesta, the rest of Central America boiled with Liberal reform."[30]

Although liberal ideas did not have an immediate effect upon the Nicaraguan scene, due to the conservative siesta, it is important to outline the main thrust of these reformist ideals as they represent debates which gripped nineteenth century Central America. William Pike, the Latin American church historian, describes the ascendency of a liberal ideology in Central America, as

> ...a rigorous anti-clerical attack was launched. The so-called Liberals were essentially the political 'outs' of the last thirty years, reinforced by a few intellectuals under the influence of continental Liberalism, and beginning

> to become aware of positivism. They felt that to the Catholic church and its political manipulations could be attributed, in large part, the fact that they had for so long a time been denied opportunities to shape national destinies. It followed logically in their minds that the temporal power of the church must be destroyed. Nor were they concerned with the possibility that in the process the church might become so weakened that it could no longer effectively discharge its purely religious functions. (31)

Liberal reform in Central America secularized education and marriage, terminated the tithe system and state support of the Church, prohibited political activities by the professional religious, diminished the church's influence and power, and finally led to the expulsion of the Jesuit order from Guatemala.[32] The new Liberal elite took up the theory of positivism from the French revolution, rejecting theological and metaphysical theories of the state, and articulated a contrary theory of the state based upon scientific and pragmatic logic.[33] However, the conservatives in Nicaragua, although attracted to these scientific ideas of government, continued to maintain amicable church-state relations.

In general, because of the 'conservative siesta', the Church in Nicaragua did not suffer the visissitudes of liberal reform. The Nicaraguan state even harboured the Jesuits whom the Guatemalan liberals had expelled in 1871. This sign of tolerance, however, was short-lived. The government of Nicaragua expelled these same Jesuits in 1881 when they

criticized the free-thinking of the Conservative government. Despite the expulsion of the Jesuits, the Church in Nicaragua continued to experience calm relations with the state; even the Nicaraguan Bishop Ulloa y Larrios refused to take sides in the Jesuit issue. This episode, says the church historian R. Mecham, should not be regarded as a Nicaragauan counterpart of liberal reform in the neighbouring republics.[34]

During this same 'conservative siesta' Great Britain and the United States expressed a growing interest in Nicaragua and Nicaraguan politics. The British had been a presence in Central America since the independence of the republics from Spain in 1821. The United States, after expanding its frontiers to the Pacific and wresting the Californias from the Latin sphere of influence, entered into contention with Britain for Central American hedgemony.[35] Both of these powers sought a possible site in Central America for a canal joining the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. The geographic peculiarities of Nicaragua provided one ideal location for this canal; geographers considered it feasible that ships could navigate the San Juan River and enter Lake Nicaragua. This distance constituted more than two thirds the breadth of the isthmus, leaving just a short coach ride to the Pacific until the canal could be completed.* In an attempt to realize this ideal of a trans-

*Cornelius Vanderbilt, the American entrepreneur, acquired this transit route, opening the Atlantic Transit Company to transport both goods and people across the isthmus.

oceanic canal the U.S. State Department sought canal rights from the Nicaraguan government. These overtures to the Nicaraguan government by the U.S. annoyed the British who were interested in the same canal system. This led to these two imperialist powers signing the Clayton Bulwer Treaty in 1850 which forbade either country exclusive rights to a canal system. Since this initial interest in the Nicaraguan canal, the United States has perceived a stable Nicaragua as the key to American dominance of Central America.[36] But, despite the relative calm following the treaty-signing, U.S. and British interests in Nicaragua were about to receive a rude shock with the rise to power of the liberal party in 1894.

ZELAYISMO, ANTI-CLERICISM AND ANTI-AMERICANISM

It is very difficult to measure the effect of religious ideas or belief systems in terms of their practical consequences in history. In this case the problem will be approached by establishing the links between the traditional church and the various political factions in Nicaragua.

As we have seen in the work of Dussel, Comblin, and Rodriguez, the fortunes of the Catholic Church were linked to the ability of the conservatives to influence the political economy of Nicaragua. In this section we will look at the relative fortunes of the liberal party and the immediate

effect of liberal reform upon the Church in Nicaragua. More importantly, however, we will look at how the demonstrated effectiveness of liberal economic policy changed the traditional relationship between the religious establishment and the conservative party. This will become evident as we analyze how the ideas of the conservatives about the Church had changed with their reascendance to power in 1910.

Conservative rule in Nicaragua ended in 1893 with the election to power of a liberal government under the leadership of Jose Santos Zelaya. The long delayed liberal reform had arrived. A modern day nationalist, Zelaya worshipped economic progress and like many of his Central American counterparts regarded public office as an occasion for personal enrichment. Combining his personalistic politics with a nationalism that questioned American interest in Central America, Zelaya became an adversary of the Monroe Doctrine and its stated objectives of consolidating American control of the Caribbean area.[37] Sixteen years of 'Zelayismo'* finally provoked American intervention in the internal affairs of Nicaragua in 1909.

The reasons for the American intervention against Zelaya become clear when we examine the links between Zelaya's liberal reforms, the economy of Nicaragua, and the goals of American foreign policy.

The introduction of coffee into the Nicaraguan economy

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*an expression for the rule of Zelaya.

took place in the eighteen-fifties. By the end of the century, when Zelaya became president, el cafe was the leading export produced in Nicaragua.[38] Liberal reformism accompanied and furthered the expansion of el cafe because the liberal elite constituted that new part of the upper class in Nicaragua involved in coffee production and agro-export capitalism. These liberal reforms, because they were promoted by the liberal elite and in turn promoted the liberals' economic interests, had an adverse effect upon the political and economic fortunes of the conservatives in Nicaragua and consequently upon the economic and political power of the Catholic Church.

Amaro Barahona Portocarrero, in his Estudio Sobre La Historia Contemporanea De Nicaragua,[39] notes some of these liberal reforms under Zelayismo and their consequences for the distribution of power and wealth in the economy. He writes:

> (A) the privatization of communal lands on which coffee cultivation was expanding--this resulted in the disintegration of indigenous communities and the disappearance of ejidos (free common lands).
>
> (B) the elimination of church lands (stipulated in Zelaya's constitution of 1893. This in turn freed much prime land for coffee plantations or agro-export farming.)
>
> (C) stimulation of coffee production (and export in general) through financial aid, information on improving yields and soils, the granting of additional peripheral untilled lands in the area of coffee production to grow grains and other subsistence crops with which to attract immigrants to work on the coffee plantations.

(D) develop infrastructure for the export economy by the construction of roads, rialroads and the port of Corinto.

(E) creation of the first bank to provide credit to landowners (opened by British banking interests). (40) (my translation).

Portocarreros' description of the changes in Nicaraguan political economy is culled from the pioneer work of Jaime Wheelock Roman: Imperialismo y Dictatura: Crisis de Una Formacion Social (1978).[41] Wheelock described the integration of the Nicaraguan economy into the world economy as a result of coffee production. He argues this brought Nicaragua into dependent capitalist relations with the world economy.[42] Wheelock's analysis demonstrates how the 'liberal reform' created the material conditions and economic base of the new liberal elite of landowners and coffee producers.[43] With their international economic ties the new liberal elite of landowners rivaled the conservatives whose plantations produced cattle, cocoa, and indigo for the local Central American market.[44] Portocarreros' and Wheelock's analyses of the Nicaraguan economy during the liberal reform (1893-1909) show that by the time the conservatives returned to political power in 1910 the Nicaraguan economy had become irreversably entrenched in agro-export capitalism. The conservatives continued to encourage the economy in this direction (with one important difference, the conservatives rejected the nationalism of Zelaya and

openly courted American investment and political favour).[45] This shift in economic policy by the conservatives undercut many of their previous allegiances to the traditions of Catholic monarchical society and signified a new support for the philosophical and economic positivism of the liberals. This ultimately affected conservative attitudes towards the secular powers of the church. While the conservatives had sided with the Church against liberal notions of the state, their new conversion to (and economic success under) liberalism, brought with it a dissolution of the traditional alliance of the Church and conservatism. Thus by 1910 the Church had not only lost its land and wealth to liberal reform, but had seen its direct political influence among the conservatives disappear.

In conjunction with these economic reforms, Zelaya consolidated senate power, created the first Nicaraguan army, emancipated the Mosquito Coast of Nicaragua from British colonialism, and, like the other liberal reformers who preceeded him in Central America, established laws directly limiting the power of the Church. The Church historian, Pike, notes: "(during the rule of Zelaya) the bishop and many priests were exiled, the concordat with the Holy See was terminated, the union between the church and state was dissolved, and education secularized."[46] This curtailment of the church's secular powers by the anti-clerical legislation of Zelaya has never been revoked by

succeeding governments.[47] Yet the ideological power of religion over the masses survived these reforms.

Clearly the decline of church power, and the changing relationship of the church vis a vis the conservative and liberal parties did not occur in a vacuum. In order to understand these developments, we must examine the repercussions of "Zelayismo" in the broader international context.

Zelaya's reforms extended beyond the Nicaraguan border when he began to interfere in the national politics of other Central American republics. His army's invasion of Honduras (1907) and the establishment of a puppet government, threatened the other republics. The Central American states sought America's help in maintaining political balance.[48] The Americans appeared to have resolved this problem when all the republics, including Nicaragua, signed the Treaty of Peace and Friendship in 1907. But Zelaya soon annulled the parts of the treaty which conflicted with his own economic interests. He compounded this uneasy relationship with the United States by reneging on the concessions of various private United States entrepreneurs in Nicaragua. For example, Zelaya opened the Nicaraguan economy to foreign investment, in keeping with his progressive liberal vision, but he kept the United States from dominating investment in Nicaragua. This "nationalistic" stance has made Zelaya a hero among modern day critics of U.S. interventionism, but in 1909 this kind of "unpredictability" convinced the U.S.

State Department to move against the Zelaya government.[49]

U.S. intervention was motivated by more than a simple concern for American investors in Nicaragua. Their underlying concern was to control the possible canal route through Nicaragua; even though by this time they had already consolidated a right of way through Panama (in 1903). When Zelaya refused them this right of way, playing off American interests against the Japanese and Germans, the United States backed a conservative rebellion against the government of this Yankeephobe.[50]

Rodriguez offers a succinct appraisal of the new spirit of U.S. foreign policy in middle America under Philander Knox, the new Secretary of State. He writes:

> Knox chose to ignore Mexico and embarked upon a unilateral program of keeping the peace in the strategic Middle America zone. ...A powerful English speaking nation, which like Britain, took for granted racial and cultural superiority, imposed its will upon Central America using similar means: the deployment of naval forces almost constantly on both coasts; the landing of marines, on occasion, to protect the lives and property of nationals as well as to buttress constituted governments; the insistence upon customs collectorships and financial reforms; and the preference for Conservative regimes, which represented the respectable and law abiding elements in Central America. There were, of course, twentieth century elaborations such as the refunding schemes by which American bankers replaced their European counterparts, thus averting outside intervention in Central America--this was the "dollar diplomacy" of the Taft Administration--and the training of local constabularies by American personnel, a contribution of the Wilson era. (51)

Building upon the philosophy of this foreign policy the Americans backed the conservative uprising against Zelaya. American marines landed in the Bluefields area of Nicaragua in 1909 under the pretext of protecting American nationals caught in the uprising. Zelaya resigned as president.[52] The conservatives filled the political void created by Zelaya's resignation and became the dominant political elite of Nicaragua (with the full blessing of the State Department of the United States) until the late 1920s. The conservatives replaced the liberal agro-exporters as the political and economic power elite in Nicaragua, and they curried American favour by opening the country to U.S. investment, guaranteeing them the canal rights, so long denied by Zelaya by signing the Bryan-Chamorro Treaty of 1914).

Although the Church had a sympathetic friend, in previous conservative governments, this new conservative government, which was put into power in 1909 through United States intervention, did not return the Church to the status it historically enjoyed.[53] According to Porto Carrero's economic evidence of the conservatives welcoming American investment, this new generation of conservatives appears to have fully embraced agro-export capitalism,* and shifted from their more traditional view of the domestic marketplace.[54] This easy acceptance of liberal economics is

*Portocarrero notes: exports & imports, which during Zelaya's rule remained relatively diversified between distinct European countries and the US, changed radically under the conservatives (towards a dependency on US with percentages nearing 70-80%).

hardly surprising. As Porto Carrero noted, conservatives and liberals often appear to be two groups in conflict, but they do not represent different class interests. They actually represent the interests of an elite class, split along family lines and economic interests, which nevertheless were united in their domination of the masses of Nicaraguan society.[55] This economic insight has important implications for our discussion of the church because the church forged links with these elites and not the masses.

The argument that I have been developing in the preceding paragraphs outlines in broad terms the historical antecedents which shaped and directed the church-state relations in Nicaragua. How then are we to understand the change in relationship between the conservatives and the church? We should first note that the historical experience of liberal reformism under Zelaya demonstrated that political power could be wielded without the traditional support base of the Catholic Church. Thus, the reluctance of the Conservatives succeeding Zelaya to reaffirm the Church's role in secular affairs could be interpreted as the recognition of a new independent variable in Nicaraguan political life, the support of the United States government.

The demise of the Church as a landowner and direct participant in Nicaraguan politics (due to Zelaya's liberal reformism) appears to have clearly separated the Church from the state in Nicaragua. Reviewing the salient historical

changes in Church-state relations up to this time we find:

(1) The Church's lands were given to private interests, and the Church was no longer allowed direct participation in Nicaraguan politics.

(2) The Conservative party, following their return to power in 1910, failed to return to the Church either her lands or her former temporal power.

(3) The economy of Nicaragua, through involvement in agro-business, entered into dependency capitalism.

(4) United States political and military intervention became the new all important variable in Nicaraguan politics. Large capital investment by Americans accompanied the return to rule of the Conservative party.

A hypothesis, to be tested in the next chapter, is that this era represents a watershed in Church-state relations and that the Church and state in Nicaragua are entering the age of corporatism. I contend the Church, realizing its political power has waned, and that the conservatives do not intend to reinstate the Church's political influence, developed a new relationship with the ruling elite. Indeed, unlike the previous historical era when the Church was a direct political and economic power, and a direct component of the state, the Church by 1910 appears to have consolidated its remaining power by taking an a-political role. This shift in attitude, however, betrays a political motive. In an age of social decline, and in the face of anti-clerical threats, the Church has become that part of

the civil society which provides ideological hegemony for the ruling elites. In no way did they seek alliances amongst the masses. Indeed, religion was sought out by the elites for ideological support. A support which the "a-political" Church seemed more than willing to give. As such, the reader should see in this apparently "a-political role" a new political arrangement, namely corporatism.

Before turning to a test of this hypothesis, we will examine how the policy of American intervention in Middle American politics affected Nicaraguan politics following the demise of Zelayismo. To this end we will examine the historical conditions which gave rise both to the National Guard in Nicaragua and to the rule of Anastasio Somoza.

SHARKS AND SARDINES*

Zelaya and the liberals fell from power in 1909. Nicaraguan historian, Umberto Belli, in his article Un Ensayo de Interpretcion Sobre Las Luchas Politicas Nicaraguences, describes the ensuing years (1910-33) as "succes-

*The Shark and the Sardines by Juan Jose Arevalo, ex president of Guatemala, was written following the fall of the Arbenz government and provides the inspiration for this section which sees American foreign policy as the shark. Fidel Castro, agreeing with this notion, writes that the sardines have nothing in common with their voracious neighbours.

sive confrontations between conservatives and liberals but mediated by the presence of a decisive variable which would determine the outcome of political struggle in Nicaragua: continual American intervention."[56] After Zelaya's resignation the ensuing civil war convinced the powers to be in the United States to quell the disorder by sending marines into Nicaragua on behalf of the conservative party. Alvaro Argüello in Incedencias del Imperialismo en el Proceso Politico de Nicaragua and Dana Munro in Intervention and Dollar Diplomacy in the Caribbean provide excellent accounts of American foreign policy in Central America at this time (1900-33).[57] These authors demonstrate how the United States intervened with military force in order to maintain their foreign policy objectives of order and stability in the Central American region. Rejecting the U.S. thesis that a strong, neutral, military force would assure the conditions for 'grassroots democracy' these historians point out that this "maturation" process lasted thirteen years (in which time the United States acted as political brokers, appointing presidents and rigging elections).[58]

Although U.S. intervention resulted in the numerous transgressions of democracy, the presence of the U.S. Military Legation did bring a modicum of political freedom to Nicaragua. And following what the opposition parties considered the fair and free elections of 1924, which the

conservative Carlos Solozano won, the United States withdrew their military forces from Nicaraguan territory. The new president belonged to a family of coffee producers from the Department of Carazo. As coffee production was dominated by the liberals and liberal interest groups, Solozano (the conservative) soon found his economic interests conflicting with those of the mainstream traditional conservatives.[59] A faction of conservatives, because their interests were directed towards consolidating control of domestic markets and not international trade or agrobusiness, questioned Solozano's loyalties. Led by the former U.S. appointed president, Emiliano Chamorro, they attempted a coup against the government in 1926; once again opening the deep wounds between liberals and conservatives and shattering the U.S. orchestrated peace. The coup blossomed into a full scale war and the United States responded by sending in a contingent of 3,000 marines. The presence of the marines created a temporary lull in the struggle, allowing the Americans to appoint Adolfo Diaz as provisional president of the country. The U.S. State Department reasoned that the appointment of a middle of the road candidate would diffuse the explosive situation. It didn't. Juan Sacasa, the deposed vice-president of the elected Solozano government (and a liberal) refused to accept the American compromise. He led a coalition of liberal leaders into the hills and renewed the civil war. Amongst his generals were the liberal

leaders General Moncada and General Cesar Augusto Sandino. In 1927 the Americans negotiated a political settlement to the war with the more amenable liberals[60] such as General Moncada. But one general, Cesar Augusto Sandino, refused to surrender and would continue to fight long after Moncada, Sacasa, and the other liberals had made political peace. Despite U.S. run elections in 1928 and 1932, Sandino and his guerrillas (Sandinistas) continued to fight against the U.S. marines and the U.S. trained National Guard. His forces controlled a large section of Nicaraguan territory by 1934. In February of that year, one year after the U.S. marines had pulled out leaving the National Guard as a stabilizing force under the control of the young liberal Anastasio Tacho Somoza, Sandino signed a peace treaty with the new president, Juan Bautista Sacasa. On the way to a celebration party Sandino and his two lieutenants were shot dead on the orders of Tacho Somoza.[61]

From the turmoil of this era two powerful forces emerged. The first was the National Guard which the U.S. trained as a 'neutral' local constabulary to maintain peace in the region. Under the control of Anastasio Tacho Somoza, its first commandant, the National Guard would become the personal army of the Somoza family until the revolution of 1979. On the other hand, Sandino, and the ideals and vision he stood for, represent the second great force which would resurface from this era with the creation of the

Frente Sandinista de Liberacion Nacional in the early 1960s.[62]

THE RISE OF SOMOCISMO

In the previous section we have seen how the United States became the new independent variable in Nicaraguan politics. The National Guard, under the rule of Anastasio Somoza, represents the greatest legacy of U.S. intervention. Somoza's rule has had a profound effect upon the political economy of Nicaragua. In this section we will analyze the ways in which Somoza consolidated his position in Nicaraguan politics and the manner in which he perpetuated his rule. The insights gained in this analysis of Somoza's rule will be utilized in the latter part of the chapter to explain how Somoza used the still formidable ideological influence of the Catholic faith in Nicaraguan society.

Four generals dominated Central American politics in the years following the economic crisis of 1929.* Their military rule has often been likened to the rule of colonial Caudillos.[63] The longest ruling of these generals, Anastasio

*General Maximiliano Hernandez Martinez 1931-44 (El Salvador)
General Tiburcio Carias Andino 1933-49 (Honduras)
General Jurge Ubico 1931-44 (Guatemala)
General Anastasio Somoza Garcia 1936-56 (Nicaragua)

Somoza Garcia, became the first commander of the Nicaraguan National Guard in 1932. The formation of the National Guard itself took place during the six year presence of American Marine personnel in Nicaragua (1927-33).[64] Anastasio Somoza became commandant of the Guardia despite considerable opposition from Nicaraguan President Sacasa. He was, however, the choice of both the American minister and the American officers who had trained the Guardia.[65]

But, as Richard Millet points out in his definitive analysis of the Guardia and its enduring dictator, the 'impartial' Guardia and its new chief were to change the balance of power and nature of politics in Nicaragua.[66] Somoza's ambitions became clear when he retired as head of the Guardia in 1935 in order to run for presidential election (the Nicaraguan constitution, in an effort to keep the Guardia politically neutral, forbade any member of the military on active duty to run for presidential office).[67] Edwardo Crawley, writing in Dictators Never Die, notes that the subsequent election of Somoza to president in 1936 changed the general trend of Nicaraguan politics. He writes:

> It was not the size of Somoza's landslide victory...but the fact that no President had ever before taken office wielding so much power of his own. Tacho (Somoza) made this abundantly clear by resuming command of the Guardia as soon as he was inaugurated ...His government was not the product of a shaky political entente, as were many of those which preceded his, nor had his victory depended on the electorial machinery of either

> of the major parties. His constituency, his real electorate, had been that Guardia Nacional which he had built up and moulded in his own image through a combination of guile, demagogy, opportunism, and ruthlessness. (68)

Crawley explains the public acquiescence to Somoza's reassuming command of the Guardia by describing the combination of power and cuadillo-like personal appeal which Somoza possessed, and emphasizing the peculiar presence of the caudillo in Nicaraguan history. He writes,

> Nicaraguan politics had been affected by miscegenation of a different sort. Whatever real differences there may have been between Liberals and Conservatives in the early years of the country's independent life, they had succumbed--as elsewhere in Latin America--to the personalistic approaches of the caudillos, charismatic or providential leaders whose appeal to the masses is almost impossible to define in terms of ideologies. They mobilised support rhough empathy with popular demands, plus skillful manipulation of deeply rooted familial and regional loyalties. Allegiance was to them personally, rather than to their 'causes', and they were perfectly able to cast aside principles and loyalties, to change allegiances once and again, without alienating their followers. What the caudillo would do with power when and if he obtained it was completely unpredicable.
>
> All the big names in Nicaraguan history belong to the caudillo tradition: Jose Santos Zelaya, Emiliano Chamorro, and Jose Maria Moncada; even Sandino and Tacho Somoza himself. (69)

The new president, Anastasio Somoza Garcia, however, did not place his entire trust in pure charisma and moved

quickly to acquire the loyalties of the Guardia, the U.S. State Department, the economic elite of Nicaragua, and even the loyalty of the Catholic Church.

In general, he acquired these loyalties in the following manner. First, as he built his domestic, economic, and power base in Nicaragua, he began to kick back sweet jobs and promotions to his most loyal guardsmen and political allies. His use of economic prizes to buy allegiance became a form of institutionalized graft.[70] Secondly, on the international scene, Somoza manipulated the affection of the United States state department. Richard Millet, in his biography of Somoza, attributes his astute manipulation of U.S. affection to his excellent command of the English language and his training at West Point, which familiarized him with the fears and ideology of the U.S. military.[71] Indeed, because Somoza declared war upon the Axis powers during World War II, and later took a firm pro-American stance against Communism during the days of cold war politics, he acquired military, economic, and political support from the Americans. Moreover, the United States state department saw Nicaragua as strategic not only to defend the Panama Canal Zone but also as a source of industrial raw materials. As a result of these international links, Somoza presented himself <u>in the domestic political arena</u> as a representative of American interests in Central America. (He furthered this image by exploiting

his marginal acquaintance with President Roosevelt.[72]) All of these factors contributed to the myth of the caudillo.

Likewise Somoza won over the high clergy of the Church by presenting himself as an anti-Communist standard bearer. Nicaraguan historian, Humberto Belli, argues thatthe high clergy, almost all linked to Spanish roots, shared the trauma of the Spanish Civil War (1936) and a resulting aversion to Communism. Belli feels that Somoza represented the type of strong authoritarian personality which the Church felt would defend Catholicism against Marxism, like Franco--the conquerer of Iberic Communism.[73]

Although Somoza carefully manipulated these basic factors in Nicaraguan politics, dividing the opposition, co-opting the Church, and controlling the National Guard, the longevity of his rule deserves special mention. (This process of continual rule is known as continuismo, and in Nicaragua became known as Somocismo.) Somoza ruled from 1936-56. All the other autocratic Central American caudillos fell from power immediately following World War II due to an upsurge of democratic ideology.[74] Somoza's ability to avoid the criticisms by these democratic idealists cannot be attributed solely to his "leadership" qualities.

Simultaneous with these desires for democracy in Central America there occurred in Nicaragua a basic shift in the economic organization of the country which broadened Somoza's base of political support. This economic boom

was peculiar to Nicaragua and the ensuing prosperity undermined democratic criticism of the regime. H. Belli, in his excellent analysis of the Nicaraguan cotton boom after World War II writes:

> In terms of political impact, the augmentation of the public sector, as much in employment as investments, considerably amplified the political base which sustains Somocismo. (75)

The Somoza state built a road system, new port facilities, encouraged foreign capital investment, introduced a labour code, and a social security system--all of which contributed to a flourishing economy. Even though much of this economic improvement led to an immediate personal gain for the Somoza family, it also increased the number of people employed in the economy, ensuring continuismo, and the popularity of Somoza's rule.[76] But Somoza's control over the direction of the economy did not occur without other systems of support. It was predicated to a great extent, on his control of the National Guard.

On the one hand, he maintained his control over the military because he provided them with economic security through a system of institutionalized graft. On the other hand, he maintained the economic control which allowed him to offer this graft by virtue of the military's allegiance to his rule, and all of this was made possible because the economy was enjoying some very real growth. In this manner,

Somoza Garcia continued his rule, with some help from sham elections and manipulation of the constitution, until his assassination in 1956.

Now that we have some understanding of the Somoza regime both from the 'caudillismo framework' and in light of some of the social economic analysis I have developed, I think we can broaden our understanding of the Nicaraguan situation by including in our analysis the concept of corporatism.

Historians and political analysts of the Latin American scene have found the concept of corporatism of heuristic value in the study of the Latin American state and Latin American politics.[77] The corporatist perspective introduces certain cultural determinants in lieu of or in conjunction with more grand theories of social change. Howard Wiarda's essay, Towards a Framework for the Study of Political Change in the Iberic-Latin Tradition: The Corporative Model (1973), represents a major articulation of the concept of corporatism.[78] The dominant approach to the study of Latin American political change at the time of Wiarda's essay employed a liberal pluralist model of political change based upon studies of North American and European societies. Wiarda argued that this theoretical paradigm, which dominated Latin American studies, could not account for the peculiar philosophical traditions of Latin American society and culture. Wiarda sought to replace this liberal pluralist

gestalt with "a distinct sociopolitical tradition and model that is closely attuned to the politico-cultural tradition of Iberia and Latin America and essential for understanding it."[79] That tradition he calls corporatism.

This type of tradition, Wiarda noted, is peculiar but not exclusive to Latin America. As he writes,

> Corporatism and the corporate tradition are not just ideas and institutional forms of passing interest, but instead constitute an ongoing tradition, strongly intertwined with the history and culture of an area and continuing today to influence political behavior and the structure of society and polity in a great variety of systems both traditional (Paraguay, Nicaragua) and modernizing (Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, Peru) both left and right. (80)

Wiarda described the major characteristics of the corporate state as: a political culture and socio-economic order that at its core was essentially two-class, authoritarian, hierarchical, elitist, patrimonial, Catholic, stratified and corporate.[81]

Corporatism as a way of political life becomes clearer when contrasted against the pluralist model of the political state. Pluralism, writes Phillip Schmitter in his highly respected article "Still the Age of Corporatism", can be characterized

> as a system of interest representation in which the constituent units are organized into an unspecified number of multiple, voluntary, competitive, nonhierarchically

> ordered and self-determined (as to type or scope of interest) categories which are not specifically licensed, recognized, subsidized, created, or otherwise controlled in leadership selection or interest articulation by the state and which do not exercise a monopoly of representational activity within their respective categories. (82)

Schmitter rejects this pluralistic model of interest representation as misleading for the study of Iberic-Latin American politics. As an alternative he presents a reworked, and widely accepted, improvement of Wiarda's corporate model. He writes,

> Corporatism can be defined as a system of interest representation in which the constituent units are organized into a limited number of singular, compulsory, noncompetitive, hierarchically ordered and functionally differentiated categories recognized or licensed (if not created) by the state and granted a deliberate representational monopoly within their respective categories in exchange for observing certain controls on their selection of leaders and articulation of demands and support. (83) (my emphasis)

At first glance it appears as if the state in the corporate society which Schmitter depicts will exercise an almost totalitarian control over the political system. Citing the dictatorial regimes of Mussolini, and Franco as exceptions to the functional utility and promise of the model, Schmitter and Wiarda argue that the state itself would be limited by the rights and spheres of interests which the various corporate groups represent.

In this next section we will look for the corporate characteristics of the Somoza state, contending that there are numerous examples of licensed spheres of interest in the history of his rule. We conclude, however, that the corporate nature of Nicaraguan society prolonged Somoza's reign by diverting and fractioning opposition to the state instead of moderating its totalitarian tendencies. Utilizing Alfred Stepans notion of Inclusionary Corporatism, we define the Corporate State in Nicaragua as an historical response by Somoza and the governing elite to the threat which liberal democratic ideals posed to totalitarian leaders following World War II.

Even though the corporate mdoel has been used to analyze other Latin American states[85] no authors have directly employed this model in an analysis of the Nicaraguan state under Somoza. Nevertheless the corporate model has been applied to a variety of socio-political structures and likewise has generated numerous alternative forms. Wiarda notes,

> Although political discourse in Latin America in the post-World War II period was usually couched in terms of the familiar Liberal-Conservative debate, the real struggle, it may be suggested, was between alternative corporatist conceptions. In Brazil it was the left-syndicalist position of Goulart as opposed to the authoritarian conservatism of the military; in Chile it was the social Catholic position of the Christian-Democrats, the socialist-syndicalism of Salvadore Allende, and the authoritarian-gremialist position of the army and so on. The debate was not so much between corporatism and something else as to the appropriateness of con-

flicting corporatist solutions. (86)

Given this heterogeneity of corporate models, the manner in which the state developed under 'Somocismo' appears to have had a decidedly corporate flavour, i.e., composed of noncompetitive, hierarchically ordered, and functionally differentiated categories of responsibility which were recognized, created, and licensed by a near totalitarian state.

Most analysts of Nicaraguan politics under Somoza have utilized the 'caudillismo' approach or a modified 'caudillismo' approach which recognizes Somoza's charismatic command over the loyalty of the National Guard to explain his control over the direction of the state and the balance of power in Nicaragua.[87] However, Richard Millet, although subscribing in part to the 'great man' theories of caudillismo, argues that Somoza's rule should be understood as more than the personalism of the caudillo. Millet writes,

> Somoza's ability to manipulate domestic politics is perhaps the most complicated and least understood aspect of his regime... he tolerated a surprising amount of organized internal opposition. Even those* who rebelled

*The best example of this calculated mercy is the Chamorro family. As vociferous opponents of the Somoza family and editors of the opposition paper La Prensa, they were jailed on numerous occasions, but always returned to the political fray. Indeed, it was the assassination of Chamorro in 1978 which caused a tremendous general strike, and undermined the corporatist nature of the Somoza state.

> against him, though subjected to physical abuse, imprisonment and exile at the time, would often be back in the country and actively engaged in politics again within a few years. This political style was uniquely Somoza's. (88)

By applying some of the concepts of corporatism to Millet's description of Somoza's political style, it becomes clear that Somoza's tolerant attitude towards opposition was carefully orchestrated. When one regards the ways in which Somoza perpetuated his rule, this notion of orchestrated or licensed opposition becomes clearer.

While the other caudillos fell from power due to the clamor for democratic government (Gen. Ubico, Guatemala, 1944, Martinez, El Salvador, 1944, Tiburcio Andiono, Honduras, 1948), Somoza managed to prolong his political career, because he purposely developed the economy and allowed the opposition to participate, to a degree, in the decision-making of the government.

For example, after ten years in rule it became apparent to the opposition parties in Nicaragua that Somoza wished to perpetuate his power, despite the constitutional ban against another term in office. Somoza, staying within the letter of the law, retired his name from nomination and supported Dr. Leonardo Arguello for president in the election of 1946. Arguello won the election, with the help of some judicious ballot counting. However, when Arguello attempted to remove Somoza as the head of the Guardia, Somoza engineered a coup,

replacing Arguello as president with his own uncle, Victor Ramon y Reyes. During the rule of Ramon y Reyes, Somoza negotiated numerous pacts with the conservative party, allowing them input in the constitution of 1950, a large block of seats in the Senate, and representation on the Supreme Court, in exchange for the right to once more run for president in 1950. In this manner Somoza kept co-opting his adversaries into the political system, leaving these opponents convinced that they could eliminate his rule politically and not militarily.

Undoubtedly these political machinations were acceptable to a great extent because the economy under Somoza was enjoying an unprecedented boom. Further, Somoza appealed with a combination of threats and promises to the ambitions of both the conservatives and the military leaders and won them over to his side through bribery or by making them identify their interests with his own career ambitions. This was made easier because Somoza's enlightened economic policies had made Nicaragua's economy the most flourishing in Central America by 1960.[89] Millet notes that Somoza made many of his opponents wealthy and if they were already wealthy he rarely jeopardized them economically. In this way he entrenched them in the economic system, offering them limited amounts of decision making powers and effectively separating them from a base of support amongst the impoverished masses.[90]

Somoza did not limit this access to the economy and politics to merely the other elites in Nicaragua. Likewise he promoted (albeit under his control) the labour movement in Nicaragua. Indeed the Nicaraguan Constitution of 1945 contained the first Labour Code of Workers' Rights in any of the Central American republics.[91] Somoza's intent in promoting labour seems to go beyond the simple observation that the changing material conditions of industry (of which Somoza owned over 40%)[92] necessitated a large pool of labourers. Millet argues that Somoza actively presented his government as progressive and liberal by cultivating his ties with the United States (the ideological fountainhead of liberalism), and by promoting labour as a participant in the economic boom of the 1950s.[93] Both at the international level and on the domestic front, Somoza presented a convincing platform of 'liberalism' which quieted the worldwide clamor for the democratization of military governments. But the 'liberalism' which Somoza promoted, he also controlled.

James Petras, the noted Marxist scholar, in his analysis of the Nicaraguan revolution (1979) describes this type of 'liberalization' as "selective and time bound...it displaces the fractions and sectors of traditional society, while failing to integrate or provide mechanisms of representation for the new classes generated by capitalist development.... the growth of capitalism and intrabourgeois conflicts

provided a gloss of "competitive" politics, limited by the overwhelming concentration of power in the hands of the autocratic dictatorship and the total subordination of the National Guard to Somoza."[94] Although I agree with Petras' analysis, he has overlooked the function which the "gloss of political competition" played in prolonging the rule of Somoza. Somoza did provide mechanisms of representation for the new classes and these mechanisms of representation (i.e., labour unions and political parties) served the particular purpose of further fractioning and compartmentalizing the new classes generated by the changing material conditions of the Nicaraguan economy.

An example of how this fractioning of the labour movement took place is evidenced in Somoza's work with the Nicaraguan Communist party. Somoza arranged to give the Communists a political voice in the Nicaraguan labour movement in exchange for their support of his political platform. However, Millet notes, "a wide gap remained between promise and performance and labour never did become a pillar of the regime. What Somoza's efforts did accomplish was to deny labour support to potential political opposition movements."[95] Indeed labour became so split and "internally fragmented by extreme right and left wing factionalism that the Somoza regime constantly monitored the 30,000 member workers' union in order to detect any dangerous cohesions in its organization. But disunity was

built into the organizations that comprised the movement. For example, the Marxist Independent General Confederation of Labour (CGTI) with its 12,000 members could not come to terms with the government patronized General Confederation of Labour (CGT) whose 10,000 members openly supported the Somozas. Thus a monolithic opposition against the Somozas from this sector of the economy was impossible."[96] Essentially, and as Wiarda and Schmitter suggested was typical of corporate states, Somoza licensed his opposition in order to control them.

To a certain extent Nicaraguan society can be characterized as a corporate state, i.e., a system of essentially non-competitive (licensed) spheres of competence which gain their autonomy in exchange for obedience to the state (which in our case means Somoza and the liberal party of Nicaragua).

Yet the corporatism of Schmitter and Wiarda, although a useful term for describing Nicaraguan society, presents a fairly benign analysis of how those who hold economic and political power license the activities of the other interest groups in society. In our case we can see that Somoza could preside over a corporate-like social structure only because he had the power to manipulate or ultimately crush his opposition. Once having recognized the power Somoza wielded in the corporate structure, we must question the extent to which intermediary structures, such as guilds,

unions, the church, opposition parties, etc., moderated his power, or they contributed to it!

In the Nicaraguan situation it appears on the one hand, as if Somoza did not suppress political opposition because he was anxious to maintain a good corporate image abroad."[97] On the other hand, Somoza promoted political groups on the domestic scene in order to splinter and divide opposition to his rule. In the final analysis, however, no opposition party was allowed to win an election because Somoza maintained ultimate control due to his command over the Guardia. Thus corporatism perfected Somoza's rule.

We can understand corporate concepts in two ways: first, corporatism can be seen as a "natural outgrowth of Hispanic society (a cultural fossil from the past, as Wiarda and Schmitter use it), or secondly, corporatism can be seen as an historically specific event inextricably linked to the changes in the economic, political, and military power structures of Nicaraguan society. Alfred Stepan, in The State and Society, Peru in Comparative Perspective, utilizes this historical approach when he stresses that modern Latin American corporatism is a response to a crisis, a response that leads elites to completely re-structure societal-state relationships.[98] In the latter case, corporatism is seen as an alternative to the development of class interests. The government compartmentalizes people

into corporate[99] bodies, and provides a stabilizing antidote to possible class conflict. Unlike Wiarda and Schmitter who consider corporatism to be a natural, evolutionary outgrowth of Hispanic society, Stepan views it as a manipulative attempt by elites to perpetuate their power. Stepan's understanding of corporatism appears most applicable to the Somoza regime.

Stepan develops two typologies from Schmitter's concept of state corporatism: inclusionary and exclusionary corporate systems. Exclusionary corporate systems are characterized by "the repression of existing autonomous organizations, highly coercive policies to stifle descent, and emphasis on efficiency, and a lack of policies favouring the working classes....The historical examples Stepan cites are the post-1964 Brazilian government, the Pinochet regime in Chile, and the system Organia attempted to establish in Argentina in 1966."[100]

Inclusionary corporatism, however, incorporates the workers and peasants by helping them form organizations, or by negotiating with existing groups. The inclusionary system tries to sponsor limited, controlled mobilization against its enemies, and into state chartered structures.[101] The Somoza state from 1936-56 most closely resembles the inclusionary model of corporatism. Indeed Luis Somoza (1956-67) would govern in a similar manner. Only with the rise to power of Anastasio Debayle Somoza in 1967 would

corporatism fail to quell the opponents of the regime.

The acceptance by the Church of a corporate role in Nicaraguan society was totally compatible with their theology of Christendom. Corporatism is a Catholic concept. It arose in the mid-1850s as a response by the Church to the impoverishment of the working classes during the industrialization of Europe. The corporatists attempted to mediate between capital and labour in strikes while at the same time offering the workers a Christian alternative to socialism. The basic assumption of corporatism, and that which guided the Christian democratic movements of Latin America, was the conviction that specifically Christian solutions could be found for the problems of post-enlightenment industrial society. It is a trans-class analysis, which rejects the class antagonisms of socialist analysis by emphasizing the doctrine of charity. As Jeannie Hornosty writes, "The principles of corporatism were based on essentially the following three elements:

> (1) acceptance of the lower classes' desire to improve their social conditions as legitimate
>
> (2) a conviction that a spirit of sacrifice in the ruling classes would mean a willingness to relinquish some of their privileges and material advantages
>
> (3) a belief that workers would patiently await such improvements and would not resort to violence.[102]

Thus the corporatist philosophy becomes the link between the other worldly themes of Christendom and the Church's

very real concern to maintain a strong presence and following among the masses. In order to maintain this presence, the Church appears to have accepted Somoza and Somoza's "spirit of corporatist sacrifice." Moreover, Somoza appears to have fostered and promoted the Church's new corporate links to his government. Hard evidence to support this kind of analysis, that Somoza purposely sponsored and licensed opposition to his regime in order to control it, is at the best of times difficult to obtain. Given the oppressive conditions the Somoza regime placed upon political statements which threatened the state, such evidence is virtually impossible to find. Nevertheless, we can draw upon various public formulations (both of the political right and left) which speak to the relationship of the Church to the state during this era and develop a general view of the role the Church played under the Somoza rule from 1936-56.

The Church employed many political maneouvers to maintain secular power in the Nicaraguan society. During the Somoza regime, however, she did not fight to regain the political power enjoyed previous to Somoza, and remained silent on political issues. Utilizing the concept of inclusionary corporatism which we have outlined, this silence of the Church concerning social/political issues appears to parallel the tradeoff Somoza made with the political opposition parties and labour (i.e., autonomy in

exchange for political support of his rule). By remaining neutral and confining itself to religious issues, the Church enjoyed the sponsorship of the regime and autonomy over the religious corporate sphere. Her silence on political issues, however, represented a complicity with the politics of the regime.

The Church historians, Pike and Mecham, note how Somoza did not continue the persecution of the Church that characterized the rule of the liberals which preceded him.[103] In general, the Constitution of 1950 did not seek to limit the few remaining economic and political powers of the Church in Nicaragua, whereas the constitutions of El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala sought to limit the powers of the Church, even in the religious sphere.[104] Pike writes, "Anastasio Somoza, the dominate political figure in the country for the previous twenty years was known to entertain a friendly attitude toward the church ...Evidencing the amicable church-state relations, the new Constitution of 1950 did not enjoin the clerics to abstain from political expression."[105] This constitution, however, did declare the absence of a state religion, that clergy could only hold minor elective office, that civil marriage was the legal ceremony, and that education was to be secularized.[106] We can see in Somoza's friendly attitude towards the Church the same 'corporate wisdom' he utilized to manipulate the labour and opposition parties. And as

Stepan shows is typical of inclusionary corporate systems, we see Somoza incorporating and even sponsoring in the constitution his traditional adversaries. The political intent of this 'friendly attitude' becomes clear when we examine article 71 of the constitution which states,

> clerics, lay people or ministers of whatever cult are prohibited from any form of political propaganda in which they invoke religious motives or patronize the religious beliefs of the people. Moreover, clerics cannot criticize the laws of the state, the government or public functionaries in particular, during religious acts or ceremonies in the church. (107)

And as Pike concurs the constitution guaranteed monastic and conventional organizations the right to exist, but stipulated that it was the function of the state to authorize establishment of corporate, moral, cultural and economic associations.[108] Somoza both offered autonomy and limited or controlled autonomy at the same time. This political strategy would serve all three Somoza presidents.

Given these limitations, it is evident that there were severe restrictions upon the Church to exercise any mandate to defend human rights or engage in political issues. But the Church's silence arose not as a result of these restrictive sanctions, so much as from a preference to openly support the Somoza regime and all it represented. Thomas Walker, in his History of the Christian Democratic Movement in Nicaragua, writes that as late as 1967 "the

Somoza regime depended for its existence upon six sources of support: the military, the economic elite, the bureaucracy, the liberal party, U.S. 'aid and comfort', and the church hierarchy. The importance of each of these fluctuated considerably. Nevertheless the order in which the supportive institutions are listed above with military first and the Church last gives a fairly accurate idea of the relative significance of each in the Somoza system."[109]

There are a dearth of reports outlining this complicity of the Church hierarchy with the Somoza regime. Nevertheless I have compiled various statements, from ideologically diverse sources which represent a consensus as to the nature of Church/state relations under the Somoza family between 1936-67. First, the Area Handbook of the United States state deparment on Nicaragua notes that "despite the historic opposition (of the Church and the liberals) the Church and the Partido Nacional Liberal governments since 1937 have maintained normal relations and there has been no marked hostility of church and state."[110] James Guy in The Agony of Nicaragua describes this normal relationship in a slightly different vein. He writes, "The position of the church was relatively weak as an opposing force. Historically, the church tended to take a permissive stance on all government activities. The church came to accept the Somozas and the Liberals as defenders of the status quo."[111] Portocarrero in his Historia Contemporanea

views this permissiveness quite differently. He notes that "the major part of the hierarchy and the clergy of the Nicaraguan Catholic Church (an institution which exercises a great ideological influence over a great portion of the society) has traditionally maintained a position of open complicity with the Somoza regime and has only adopted an attitude of condemnation since the rule of Anastasio Somoza III (especially since the publication of the Carta Pastoral de los Obispos de Nicaragua sobre los Principios de la Actividad Politica de La Iglesia 1972)."[112]

In Nicaragua el pueblo vence a la dinastia, the British Center for Political Studies in Latin America and Africa, describe this complicity of Church and state as follows:

> The Nicaraguan Church, until recent times, has been a silent accomplice of the Somoza dictatorship. And this silence took place not only at the level of the hierarchy, but also amongst priests and sisters, for the most part extranjeros (foreigners) origen, or strangers to the social-political problems of the country....The dictator (especially A. Debayle Somoza) for his part, kept alive, even given his history, this alliance of the throne and the altar, making public confession of his Catholic faith and putting before the very eyes of the masses a series of symbols which reflected this union: most notably the presence of the hierarchy of the Church in official acts, inaugurations, benedictions, etc. (113)

Clearly this wide spectrum of opinions, although offering different reasons for the Church's relationship to the state,

represents a consensus. The consensus is that the relationship of Church and state in Nicaragua under all three Somozas was characterized by a relative calm and that the Church offered no obvious criticism of the regime. In part the Church's support of the Somoza regime can be seen, as Belli suggested,[114] as support of an anti-Communist standard bearer. On the other hand, and in light of the historical emnity of liberalism and Catholicism, it is totally within the realm of possibility that Somoza could have used the military might he controlled to crush the Church. This did not occur, at least in part, because Somoza tolerated opposition to his rule in order to maintain his democratic image abroad and in order to co-opt his enemies into the system. In this manner he used the Church to lend legitimacy to his rule. Likewise the Church found in the inclusionary corporate state of Somoza an ideal way in which to retain some relative autonomy over the religious sphere without conflicting with the ruling elite and incurring an anti-clerical backlash.

During the rule of Somoza the Church itself was a part of the elite class in Nicaragua, inhabiting the wealthier areas of the country, and composed to a great extent of priests from the elite families of the country. Such is it that when we analyze the history of church-state relations from independence to the 1960s, we find the Church supporting either the conservative elite or the liberal elite, but not

representing the masses of the people. This happened, I think, because the Church was committed to a world view which saw the traditional decision making class as the only class capable of directing the nation. Therefore one finds the Church supporting one or the other elite but never promoting the masses as a political alternative. Revolt, then, amongst and between the elite classes of Nicaraguan society, did not present the same threat to the status quo as confrontation with the popular masses. Dr. Ernesto Castillo, addressing the First Episcopal Conference of Nicaraguan clergy in 1969 writes:

> from independence to the present, we do not encounter either one insurrection or political change which has reflected the social unrest amongst the oppressed classes, but only revolts and changes due to political gameplaying. This state of affairs has influenced the Nicaraguan people to adopt a conformist relationship to their problems, seeing themselves as objects of the decisions of the decision making classes and not as subjective participants in the activities of the state....The Church in Nicaragua has always identified with the dominant classes, and consciously impeded the diffusion of social doctrine (amongst the masses) assuming instead a condemnatory attitude towards any challenges to conformity. (115)

It is plausible, then, to argue that the Church saw no other alternative but to support the Somoza regime because a majority of the Church devoutly believed that inexorable forces, both divine and human, decreed the continuance of

the status quo and its essentially elitist social structure. This would begin to change with the rise of Anastasio Somoza Debayle in 1967 and in the light of some new ways of thinking in the Latin American Church.

In this section we outlined some of the economic, social and political factors which played upon church/state relations in Nicaragua from independence until the 1960s. We found that the Church initially participated in the politics of the country but lost most of its secular powers during the liberal rule of Zelaya (1893-1909). Following Zelaya's rule we noted that the Church did not regain its former political import and that ensuing governments began to turn to the United States for legitimation (both ideological and military) of their rule. The most notable of these contemporary rulers was Anastasio Somoza Garcia. We discussed some of the major factors which various historians cited as contributing to his rule and introduced the concepts of caudillismo and corporatism to further this interpretation of Somoza's enduring rule. Finally, within the social-economic framework of the Somoza regime, we sought to understand the "silence" of the Church on social political issues in light of Somoza's problematic rule. We concluded that Somoza manipulated this silence, offering the Church a limited corporate sphere of responsibility in the society in exchange for her abstention from politics.

Although Somoza was assassinated in 1956, the legacy of his rule, and the corporate manner in which he maintained it, made it possible for his sons to succeed him in Nicaraguan politics. Luis Somoza would become president in 1957 and Anastasio Somoza Debayle would become head of the National Guard. Somoza Debayle would become president in 1967 after the death of his brother Luis. Turning to this contemporary era, we will examine the changing role of the Church and various other social groups in the Nicaraguan social structure leading up to the overthrow of the government in 1979.

FOOTNOTES

1. Frederick B. Pike, "The Catholic Church in Central America", The Review of Politics, Vol. 21, #1.

2. Enrique Dussel, "Church-State Relations in Peripheral Latin American Formations", The Ecumenical Review, Vol. Enrique Dussel, Historia de la Iglesia en America Latina, Colonaje yLiberacion (1492-1973). Barcelona, Nova Terra, 1974.

3. Area Handbook on Nicaragua. Published by United States State Department, 1970, pp. 137-138.

4. Dussel, Ecumenical Review, p. 30. See also Darcy Ribiero: O Processo Civilizatorio. Brasiliera: Editora Civilizacao, 1968 (English translation, The Civilization Process, Harper & Row, New York).

5. Frederick B. Pike, The Conflict Between Church and State in Latin America, ed. University of Notre Dame, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964. See section on "The Colonial Period."

6. Dussel, Ecumenical Review, p. 31.

7. Enrique Dussel, History and the Theology of Liberation, trans. by John Drury, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1971, pp. 96-97.

8. Pike, The Conflict Between Church and State in Latin America, 1964. See also bibliography for extensive list of Latin American Church Histories.

9. All of Enrique Dussel's books take great pains to point out some of these earliest revolutionary Christians.

10. Pike, The Review of Politics, pp. 83-85. See also J. Lloyd Mecham, Church and State in Latin America, chapter 14, "State Church and Free Church in the Republics of Central America", Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1934. University of North Carolina Press, pp. 3-1-331.

11. Mario Rodriguez, Central America, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc. 1965, pp. 56-66.

12. Instituto de Estudios Politicos para America Latina yAfrica (IEPALA), Nicaragua El Pueblo Vence a la Dinastia, Madrid 1979, p. 9.

13. Mecham, op.cit., p. 310.

14. See Pike, Mecham, Dussel, op.cit., passim.

15. Jose Comblin, The Church and the National Security State, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1979, p. 52.

16. Pike, Review of Politics, p. 91; Mecham, Church and State in Latin America, p. 326.

17. Dussel, The Ecumenical Review, p. 32.

18. Ibid., p. 33.

19. Opcit.,passim. Pike.

20. IEPALA, op.cit., pp. 45-46.

21. Thomas L. Karnes, The Failure of Union (1824-1975), Tempe, Arizona, Arizona University Press, 1976, Chapter Three.

22. Mecham, op.cit., p. 33. See also Pike, The Ecumenical Review, p. 87.

23. Rodriguez, op.cit., p. 87.

24. Mecham, op.cit., p. 314.

25. Karnes, op.cit., pp. 145,146.

26. Pike, Review of Politics, p. 88-89.

27. Ibid., p. 89.

28. Rodriguez, Pike and Mecham make this point throughout their works. See also Amaro Barahona, Portocarrero, "Estudio Sobre La Historia Contemporanea de Nicaragua", in Revista Del Pensamiento Central Americano, Vol. 32 (157).

29. Rodriguez, op.cit., pp. 90-91. There are numerous articles on this era in Nicaraguan history. See for example, W.O. Scroggs, Filibusters and Financiers, New York: MacMillan, 1916.

30. Edoardo Crawley, Dictators Never Die, New York: St. Martins, 1979, pp. 32-34.

31. Pike, op.cit., p. 90.

32. Ibid., p. 89.

33. Rodriguez, op.cit., p. 98.

34. Mecham, op.cit., p. 329.

35. Rodriguez, op.cit., see Chapter three.

36. Crawley, op.cit., p. 33.

37. Jeffrey B. Gayner, "Nicaragua & U.S. Foreign Policy", in Beldon Bell Nicaragua, An Ally Under Siege, Washington: Council on American Affairs, 1978, p. 25-38.

38. Portocarrero, op.cit., p. 32, and Jaime Wheelock Roman, Imperialismo y Dictatura, Mexico: Siglo veintiuno editores. 1979. See Chapters 1-3.

39. Portocarrero, op.cit.

40. Ibid., p. 32.

41. Wheelock Roman, op.cit., passim. For a review of this book in English see Latin American Research Review, Vol. p. 137, by Anthony Winson. Jaime Wheelock is Director of the Agrarian Reform in Nicaragua.

42. Anthony Winson, "Popular Struggle and the Political Economy of Dictatorship in Nicaragua", in LARR, Vol. pp. 137-139.

43. Wheelock, op.cit., Chapter 5, p. 104-140.

44. Portocarrero, op.cit., p. 34.

45. Wheelock, op.cit., passim. Portocarrero, op.cit., p. 35.

46. Pike, op.cit., p. 91.

47. Ibid., pp. 92-95.

48. Rodriguez, op.cit., pp. 105-113.

49. John J. Tierney, Jr., "Revolutions and Marines: The U.S. and Nicaragua in the Early Years", in Beldon Bell (ed.) Nicaragua, An Ally Under Siege, Washington: Council on American Affairs, 1978, pp.8-24. A good right wing interpretation but poor on history.

50. Alvaro Arguello, "Incidencias del Imperialismo en el Processo Politico de Nicaragua" Revista del Pensamiento Central Americano, Vol. 159, 1978. This presents a much

more factual appraisal of the years 1909 to 1926, the years of the first intervention of American troops in Nicaraguan politics. See also the excellent bibliography which Arguello offers of this era (with many English language texts).

51. Rodriguez, op.cit., p. 116.

52. Arguello, op.cit., passim. See also IEPALA, op.cit., pp. 43-44.

53. Portocarrero, op.cit., p. 33.

54. Ibid., p. 35.

55. Ibid., p. 33. Portocarrero notes: "In Nicaragua, as in all Latin American countries, the conceptions Liberal and Conservative (conceptions which were frequently assigned to conflicting social groups) were more than a product of existing social relations, (they were) an imported ideological cloak which was transmitted through mechanisms like regional tradition and the tyranny of a caudillo...for this reason it would be folly to see in these ideologies a clear expression of contradictory class interests. To follow the trail of class confrontations it is more important, then, to analyze the designs and plans of the social activities of these groups and individuals who identify with either of these political concepts.

    Historically, we often find evidence of alliances of Conservatives and Liberals against other Conservatives or Liberals, and evidence of Conservatives collaborating with Liberal governments and vice versa, even evidence of families or individuals who are sometimes Liberals and later appear to be Conservatives."

56. Belli, op.cit., passim.

57. Arguello, op.cit., passim. and Dana Monro, Intervention and Dollar Diplomacy in the Caribbean, 1900-1921, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1974.

58. Ibid., passim.

59. Belli, op.cit., p. 36.

60. Ibid., p. 60. Belli notes that the Sandino unsurrection signalled a split in the Liberal party between elitist Liberals interested in increasing personal wealth and their share of the economy at the expense of other

interest groups, and those Liberal populists who took up the themes of the enlightenment in their fight for social reform, increasing rationalism in politics, and anti-imperialism.

61. IEPALA, op.cit., pp. 45-47.

62. On the Guardia see: Richard Millet, Guardians of the Dynasty, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1977. For works on Sandino and Sandinista Liberation Front, see bibliography attached and see also, Umberto Ortega, 50 Anos de Lucha Sandinista, Direccion Nacional del Frente Sandinista de liberacion Nacional, 1978.

63. Robert Alexander, Prophets of the Revolution (New York: Praeger, 1968), p. 6. For a criticism of this assumption, see Richard Millet, Anastasio Somoza Garcia, A Brief History of Nicaragua's Enduring Dictator, Revista Interamericana (Puerto Rico), Vol. 7, Issue 3, 1977. The caudillo in Colonial times was the great military leader, like for example, Pizarro, who both ruled the military might and made the political decisions. In general, Caudillismo is a great-man theory which suggests the qualities of the man inspire loyalty and not the office held.

64. Millet, Guardians of the Dynasty, initial chapters.

65. Millet, Anastasio Somoza Garcia, p. 490.

66. Ibid., p. 489.

67. Ibid., p. 494.

68. Crawley, op.cit., p. 95.

69. Ibid., p. 139.

70. Millet, op.cit., p. 499.

71. Ibid., p. 498.

72. Ibid., pp. 498-499, 501-503.

73. Belli, op.cit., pp. 56-57.

74. Rodriguez, op.cit., p. 134.

75. Belli, op.cit., p. 57. For example, the Exportacion de Algodon in metric tons (cotton).

1948	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956
0.2	2.2	4.3	3.5	15.0	23.0	21.7	51.8

76. Ibid., p. 57. The public sector doubled between 1950-60 and the public expenditure tripled.

77. Michael J. Francis, "Latin American Studies", The Review of Politics, Vol. 42, No. 1, Jan. 1980, pp. 42-53.

78. Howard Wiarda "Toward a Framework for the Study of Political Change in the Iberic-Latin Tradition, World Politics, 15(1973).

79. Ibid., p. 56.

80. Ibid., p. 54.

81. Phillipe Schmitter cited in Michael J. Francis, op.cit. p. 39. Also see Phillipe Schmitter, "Still the Century of Corporetism?", Rev. of Politics, 36, 1974.

82. Phillipe Schmitter cited in Ibid., p. 40.

83. Phillipe Schmitter cited in Ibid., p. 40.

84. Alfred Stepan, The State and Society in Comparative Perspective, Princeton, 1978.

85. Nicaragua is invariably mentioned as a type of corporate state but only in passing reference, never as a focus of investigation.

86. Wiarda, op.cit., p. 45.

87. See Belli, op.cit., passim. and Crawley, op.cit., passim and Robert Alexander, op.cit., passim. and for discussion of role of local constabularies in Latin American Politics see I. Grigulevich Ariia I Revoliutsionnyi Protsess V. Latinskoi Amerike", Moravaia Ekonomikia i Mezhdunarodnye Otnosheniia (USSR) Vol. 12:40-55, Vol. 12, 1973.

88. Millet, op.cit., p. 503.

89. Wheelock Roman, op.cit., passim.

90. Belli, op.cit., pp. 58-59.

91. Millet, op.cit., p. 504. Also see Godoy, Virgilio, "El Reformismo Artesanal en el Movimento Obrero Nicaraguense (1931-60)." In Rev. Del Pensamiento Controamericano (Nicaragua), 1978, 33 (159), 2-21.

92. The fortune of the Somoza family is difficult to estimate. The New York Times, 9 of May 1974, estimated over 400 million U.S. distributed among various industries and businesses like agroproduction, airlines and shipping, mines, industry, apartment buildings, financial houses, communications and publishing houses, etc.

93. Millet, op.cit., p. 504.

94. James Petras, "Whither the Nicaraguan Revolution?", Monthly Review, Vol. 31, No. 5. Oct. 1979, p. 4.

95. Millet, op.cit., pp. 504-506.

96. James Guy, "The Agony of Nicaragua", International Perspectives, Fall 1979, pp. 27-28.

97. Thomas Walker, History of the Christian Democrat Movement in Nicaragua, Arizona Press, 1970, p. 59.

98. Alfred Stepan cited in Michael J. Francis, op.cit., p. 40.

99. Ibid., p. 40.

100. Ibid., p. 41.

101. Ibid., p. 41.

102. Hornosty, op.cit., p. 90.

103. Pike, op.cit., p. 95 and Mecham, op.cit., p. 330.

104. Pike, Ibid., pp. 93-94.

105. Ibid., p. 95.

106. Ibid., p. 96.

107. See Nicaraguan Constitution.

108. Pike, op.cit., p. 96.

109. Walker, op.cit., p. 35.

110. Area Handbook for Nicaragua, op.cit., p. 175.

111. James Guy, op.cit., p. 28.

112. Portocarrero, op.cit., p. 45.

113. IEPALA, op.cit., pp. 84-85.

114. Belli, op.cit., pp. 56-57.

115. Dr. Ernesto Castillo in De Cara al Futuro de la Iglesia en Nicaragua, Ist. Pastoral Encounter, Jan-Feb. 1969. Editorial Hospicio. Instituto Tecnico La Salle, Leon, Nicaragua, C.A.

CHAPTER IV

CONTEMPORARY RELIGION IN THE NICARAGUAN REVOLUTION

During a revolution the relationship between ideological, social, political and economic forces is a complex one. While economic forces may dominate, ideological forces can sometimes play an important role in a revolution. As such, ideological forces are extraeconomic, or more than mere reflections of the social relations of production. The triad of private enterprise, the Church, and the National Guard gave Somoza his power. The Church not only served but benefitted from the corporate interests of the dominant class of Nicaragua. Similarly, the Church, because of its corporate adherence to the status quo, failed to offer any sustenance to populist politics[1] during the reign of the two earlier Somozas. How, then, did religion, and more specifically, the Catholic Church, come to play such an important role in the Nicaraguan revolution of 1979? To understand this development, we must look at some of the general qualities of the Nicaraguan economy, and also distinguish between the attitudinal changes in society at large and those in the ecclesiastical institution. With this data we hope to demonstrate points where the larger economic and social forces coincide with ecclesiastical

changes and even exert faster and more dramatic change upon the Church in Nicaragua.

The Nicaraguan economy may best be conceptualized by what it was not. Despite having had links with international capital through the agro-export of coffee, cotton and sugar, Nicaragua remained a type of marginally developed agrarian society.[2] The attendant social relations reflected the essentially peripheral nature of the economy. In general, there were four strata: a large, peasant, agrarian class, a small unionized working class, an entrepreneurial middle class, and a traditional landowning and commercial bourgeoisie.[3] Exploitation within this social system took the form of coercion and intimidation, and ultimate power over the populace lay in the hands of Anastasio Somoza, by virtue of his control over the large paramilitary National Guard. In short, production relations were directly and indirectly controlled by force of arms. This contrasts sharply with the political form of production in capitalist countries. In capitalist countries exploitation is in most cases invisible and hidden in the wage form of labour.[4] Moreover, production takes place under a system of liberal-democratic ideals which separate public and private spheres. Thus exploitation takes place in the workplace, while the worker enjoys a sense of personal freedom in his private life.[4] But in peripheral societies the form of exploitation is coercion, coercion that permeates every aspect of

a person's life. Even a cursory look at Nicaraguan history revealed the total extent of the ruling classes' control over the nature of production and the political, civil, and human rights of the Nicaraguan populace. Consequently, the corporate relationship of the Catholic Church with the Somoza regime made perfect sense, both for Somoza (because religion provided an extra economic justification of the political form of production) and also for religion (because the Church's corporate alliance with the Somoza regime insured the reproduction of religion as a force in society).

During the 1960s, however, the major currents of change in ecclesiastical thought, and political attitudes that prevailed in Latin America manifested themselves in Nicaraguan society, and worked to undermine this alliance between religion and the Somoza regime.

The Cuban revolution of 1959 produced major social and political changes in Nicaraguan society. For Luis Somoza, who succeeded his father in 1955, the revolution symbolized a need to liberalize Nicaraguan society. Luis's liberal tendencies, however, were motivated less by a concern to help the masses and more by a concern to maintain his political power over them. In actuality Luis turned to popular promotion only after he allowed an anti-Castro invasion force to train in Nicaragua and depart from Nicaraguan airfields to invade the Bay of Pigs in 1961. Luis first attempted to democratize Nicaraguan politics by

withdrawing the Somoza family from politics. To do so he refused to run for election in 1962, thus opening elections for the first time since his father's death in 1955. Unfortunately, the freely elected presidents, Rene Schick (1963-66) and Lorenzo Guerrero (1966-67) provided a false sense of democracy. Both were pro-Somoza. And even though the Somoza family renounced political power, they continued to maintain military control because Anastasio Somoza (the youngest son of Somoza I) commanded the National Guard. Nevertheless, even given the reactionary nature of Luis's experiment with democratization, the general themes of development and modernization began to be debated in Nicaraguan society. One residual legacy of this dabbling in pseudo-democracy was an opening up to general debate and questioning, of some of the traditional, legitimated, political decision making processes.

For the Church, the atheistic nature of the Cuban revolution posed a threat to their own comfortable ideological hedgemony in Nicaragua, and prompted a rise in reformist type social programs. At this time we find the rise of Catholic action programs and the formation of a Christian Democratic Party in Nicaragua.[5]

If the Somoza forays into democracy were mere window dressing, the Church's concern for development was genuine. Nevertheless, they failed to establish any inroads in redressing the types of social inequalities that prompted

the Cuban revolution. The failure of these programs appears to have convinced some members of the Nicaraguan clergy and laity of the need to promote more radical social change. It was this small number of faithful who took up the theme of liberation, and would later become active participants in the overthrow of the Somoza regime.

The spirits of populism, popular promotion, and revolution that permeated Latin America, and Nicaragua to a lesser degree, in the 1960s elicited at least three very diverse responses on the Nicaraguan scene.

The most important government response to the spirit of democratization was the return to politics of Anastasio Somoza Debayle in 1968. Somoza Debayle the youngest son of Anastasio Somoza I, exploited his command over the National Guard to assure his election to the presidency. Rejecting outright the populist ideals of his brother Luis, and even dismissing the corporate politics of his father, the youngest Somoza formed a paramilitary, national security state.[6]

Meanwhile, a split developed within the Church between those clergy who adhered to the Somoza regime and the more progressive priests who appealed for an end to the Somoza regime and the problems the regime presented for the poor of the country. This split became obvious when the clergy and seculars convened to discuss the Church's obligations in accordance with Vatican 11 and the Medellin Documents at

the 1st Nicaraguan Bishops Conference in 1969. The progressives, led by Fr. Ernesto Cardenal (who was also an internationally acclaimed poet), Federico Arguello, an historian, and Enrique Vilchez, a theologian, argued that the Church should not limit itself to evangelizing, but should engage in "advancing man towards his full liberty."[7] Arguello, in a scathing criticism of the Somoza regime, accused the regime of being the source of social injustice in the country. Moreover, Arguello criticized the Church for its political vagueness on the question of justice, and accused it of outright complicity with the regime. Arguello's speech incited considerable controversy. Nevertheless, the mainstream clergy rejected Arguello's criticism, and reasserted the Church's desire to perform only a spiritual role in society. The documentation of this meeting[8] reveals the widening gap within the Church between those priests who would involve themselves in politics, and those priests and bishops who argued that the Church's evangelizing mandate did not extend to political denunciation of the regime. Despite the revolutionary nature of the Medellin Documents, the priests of Nicaragua drew very contrasting meanings from them, to the extent that it appears as if they had read dissimilar pastorals.

The promise of the Cuban revolution and the artificiality of Somoza's experiment with democracy produced one final element in Nicaraguan politics: the formation of the

Frente Sandinista de Liberacion Nacional (FSLN).[9] In 1961 Carlos Fonseca Amador founded the FSLN. He drew inspiration from Sandinos' guerilla war against Somoza I in the 1930s and from the successful revolution in Cuba in 1959. Fonseca and his cohorts proposed a formula for armed revolution, and rejected the feeble attempts at reformism made by the other opponents of Somoza. The FSLN enjoyed little public support for its armed insurrection in the 1960s, but in the following years gained credibility for their solution to oppressive government.

By 1967 it was evident that the hopes for social reform inspired by the Cuban revolution and such popular promotion schemes as the Alliance for Progress would not materialize in Nicaragua. For example, in the highly contested election of 1967 Anastasio Somoza used military force to intimidate the opposition. During a mass opposition rally, ten days before the election, the National Guard fired upon the crowd and killed over two hundred anti-Somoza demonstrators. Not surprisingly, the Nicaraguan bishops, led by Archbishop Alejandro y Robleto, sent a message supporting the government's "police" action. The following week Somoza won the election with over 70% of the votes.[10]

It was obvious in 1967, from examples such as this, that the hierarchy of the Church still supported Somoza. Yet the progressive themes of Liberation Theology and the

Medellin Conference had begun to influence some priests in Nicaragua. The greatest Nicaraguan symbol of the Medellin spirit existed in the Christian community of Solentiname, Nicaragua. Ernesto Cardenal, the son of a wealthy family, and a Catholic priest, formed the community of Solentiname in 1968. (The destruction of this same community in October 1977 by the National Guard would become a worldwide symbol of Christian commitment to the Nicaraguan revolution.) The community gathered to discuss the social, political and economic problems of Nicaragua, in light of the gospel message. As Cardenal wrote,

> The gospel was what most radicalized us politically. With admirable simplicity and profound theology, the people began to understand the core of the gospel message that is, the establishment on this earth of a just society without exploiters or exploited. But above all else, the Gospel taught us that the Word of God is not only to be heard, but also to be put into practice. As the people of Solentiname understood the Gospel more deeply, they could not help but feel united to their brothers and sisters who were suffering persecution and terror, who were imprisoned, tortured, burnt....In the beginning we would have preferred a revolution with non violent methods. But we soon began to realise that at this time in Nicaragua a non-violent struggle is not feasible. The truth is that every authentic revolutionary prefers non-violence to violence, but he is not always free to choose. (11)

From this quote it is immediately apparent that the Solentiname community had adopted the 'orthopraxis' methodology

of liberation theology. Their desire to establish a just society in this world not only rejected the other worldly spirituality (characteristic of Thomism) but affirmed the dialectic between everyday life and the gospel message outlined in Gutierrez's work. Consider the words of the members of Solentiname as they discuss the Bible (Matthew 11:12-19):

> It's what we've seen in Cuba. I was saying that violence is the violence of guerilla fighters, and the force is the force of the government that wants things to continue as they are; in opposition to the changes that the guerilla fighters want to make. We could also say that violence is a kind of force that wants to change an unjust situation, while force is a kind of violence that doesn't want an unjust situation to change. The first represents the renewers, a contemporary figure is Fidel Castro; its constructive, positive violence, and the violence of justice, that exists only because of the force that is the violence of injustice. Its what is happening right now. The Kingdom of Heaven has to adapt right now to this new historical situation: <u>justice conquered by violence</u>, in accordance with this text. So we're referring with this language, to a current political and social situation, right now, which exists in many countries in the Americas and in other parts of the world, but which comes from John the Baptist. (12)

Note here the blend of everyday experience with the gospel, and the way the faithful produce a synthesis which puts God on the side of the oppressed. Suddenly, the "violence of justice" can be wielded by a Christian against the "violence of injustice." A number of the members of this community took up arms and joined the FSLN during the

1970s. Cardenal himself would become the main spokesman for the FSLN prior to the revolution and is presently the Minister of Culture in the reconstruction governnent of the Sandinistas. In a moment of reflection Cardenal explained the rationale behind these young people's taking up of arms. He wrote, "It happened one day that a group of Solentiname youths, with deep conviction and after much contemplation, took up arms. Why did they do it? They did it for one reason, because of their love of god. And because of an ardent desire to implant a just society, the reign of God, for real, and in concrete, in this world." (author's translation).[13] Here Cardenal provides not only a Christian rationale (love of God) for their political acts, but also provides a Christian content to their political act (a desire for a more just society). Yet he never loses sight of the oppressive context which gave a critical content to their revolutionary praxis. Despite the radicalism among some Nicaraguan clergy and laity, the bishops of the Church hierarchy remained supportive of Somoza. The appointment of a new archbishop (Miguel Obando yBravo) in 1971 would be the first step away from this complicity with Somoza.

THE SPLIT BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE

In the early 1970s Somoza utilized his power to further his own economic greed. Through intimidation, and deft political manouvering, he began to centralize the economy in his hands. He did this by the exploiting of all other sectors of the Nicaraguan society. At the same time the Nicaraguan Church (including the hierarchy) began to take up some of the post Medellin themes such as the "option for the poor." This theme (as we saw in Chapter II) was generated by theological debates and ecclesiastical changes that had taken place in the 1960s. When these two sets of events are taken together they provide the groundwork for the deteriorating relationship between the Somoza regime and the hierarchy of the Nicaraguan Church.

The split began when the conservative opposition party, led by Fernando Arguello, made a pact in 1971 agreeing to the continuance of Somoza's presidency in return for some political tradeoffs. This deal took place in the face of considerable public pressure for Somoza's resignation.[14] The Arguello deal was a classic case of bourgeois back-scratching. Somoza announced he would step down in 1972 at the end of his constitutional term. In exchange he would give the conservatives 40% of the seats in the new assembly and one member on a new three man junta. Moreover, Somoza insisted that after another two years there would be elections super-

vised by the Organisations of American States. As it happened Somoza stepped down and the junta took over in May of 1972, but on December 23, 1972 an earthquake devastated Nicaragua[15] and Somoza (as head of the National Guard) took over the government. Humberto Ortega, in 50 Years of Sandinista Struggle, argues that the Arguello pact discredited the conservative party as the only "legitimate" opposition to Somoza, and contributed greatly to the increasing popularity of the FSLN as a viable alternative.[16] The historian Portocarrero, speaking of the ramifications of this pact, wrote,

> This political pact showed that the conservative opposition to the Somoza regime was not rooted in profound contradictions issuing from a differing location in the social structure, but from a traditional resentment provoked by their displacement from power, and a resentment of Somoza's use of his hegemonic power (the state apparatus) to augment his economic resources. (17) (author's translation)

Portocarrero argues that not only did this pact destroy the credibility of the conservatives with the people, but it also led to a splintering amongst these bourgeois opponents. As a result some dissident conservatives banded together with the Social Christians and the Socialist Party, openly protested this government rigging, and participated in massive anti-Somoza protests.

Surprisingly, the new Archbishop, Miguel Obando y Bravo, led the Church in protest against the government

pact.[18] On March 19, 1972 (in an act interpreted as the first rupture between Church and state in Nicaragua) the Nicaraguan bishops issued a pastoral entitled "Concerning the Principles of Church Political Activity." They wrote:

> One cannot close one's eyes to this reality. The various political experiences that we are seeing in our own continent (country), the revolutionary ferment that erupts without end in the form of demonstrations (more or less peaceful, guerilla or declared struggles), could be channelled or taken advantage of in certain moments by self interested political forces, but, in their origin, these are nothing but the uncoerced cries of a people taking consciousness of its situation and looking to break the molds that imprison them. They can repress and put off these intentions by force of arms but the movement is on the march, and the old systems have many faults. (19) (author's translation)

In the same year the new Bishop, Obando y Bravo, declared,

> The violence does not initiate with the poor and the oppressed. It originates with those who exercise power...The revolutionary ferment of the guerillas...is nothing but the clamor of a people taking consciousness of their own situation and searching to break the chains that imprison them. (20) (author's translation).

It is clear from these statements that the Church had broken from the Somoza government, and saw his repressive tactics as the source of violence in the country. But it remains unclear what the bishops perceived as the method to achieve the new order. Moreover, when we examine the Archbishop's explanation of guerilla activity in Nicaragua, he seemed to

be arguing that if the government was more morally responsible, there would be no cause for guerilla activity. To a certain extent this reveals the bishop's inability to grasp the real reasons for guerilla activity and the anti-Somoza movement.

Following the earthquake of 1972, Somoza dissolved the Aguerro pact and took over the government. During the reconstruction, Somoza and his National Guard cronies misused the reparation funds and their blatant theft of money and commodities intended for the poor and homeless incurred the wrath of world opinion. As a result, those bourgeoisie who had previously supported Somoza began to distance themselves from the regime not only because Somoza was using the funds to enrich himself and increase his control over the economy, but because he was squeezing them out of the marketplace.[21]

The bishops also joined in the condemnation of Somoza's excesses. Writing in their February 1973 pastoral on the necessity to reconstruct a new society in the wake of the earthquake, the bishops announced,

> This is the occasion for social and moral reconstruction, so the citizens can encounter new bases and conditions for their participation and action in the entire spectrum of human responsibilities. (22) (author's translation)

The bishops' analysis, however, remained vague and moralistic. They emphasized social harmony and moral law and did not

perceive the system to be corrupt, only those who had misused it.

Anger towards Somoza was not restricted to irate businessmen and morally outraged bishops. During this time the FSLN executed a successful kidnapping at a large gathering of politicians and pro-Somoza businessmen. To win their release, Somoza paid an expensive ransom, released some political prisoners, and agreed to allow the guerillas to fly to Cuba. It was a smashing propaganda success for the FSLN.

Country-wide repression began almost immediately. In August of 1974, in an outcry against the repression Somoza had mounted in the wake of the Sandinista kidnapping, Bishop Obando y Bravo declared,

> there will be no peace, while there is injustice, the social order cannot consist of rigid mechanisms, closed mechanisms, that deprive, repress, or monopolize the exercise of rights. (23) (author's translation).

It is clear once again from this statement that the bishop perceived the Somoza regime as the problem. But the bishop offers no viable alternative to the crisis. Although disillusioned with the regime, he appeared to still have faith that the system could be rendered just.

If the bishops were vague in naming the source of repression, many of the lower clergy were not. Edwardo Crawley, in Dictators Never Die, notes,

> The Capuchin priests of Esteli and Bluefields prepared a report for the Episcopal Conference listing at least 93 disappearances, a number of known murders, and an inventory of the methods used by the Guardia to torture prisoners. (24)

Explicit denunciations, with the naming of offenders, would become one of the practical responses of the lower clergy to Somoza's regime. Later, these denunciations would be used to discredit the Somoza regime amongst the world's nations. Meanwhile, in late 1974, Fr. Ernesto Cardenal was expelled for "subversive" activities and the Jesuit Jose Maria Gonzalez was blacklisted for "social activities."[25] Suddenly, repression by the National Guard began to extend to "troublesome" priests and Catholic laity.[26]

Three things were clear by 1974. First, the Church as a whole (including the hierarchy) had broken from the Somoza regime in part because of ecclesiastical changes since Vatican II, but more so because the contradictions of Somoza's rule had become too blatant. (Indeed by this time Somoza had dropped all pretense at corporatism and wielded bare power to realize his will.) Secondly, the growing divisions in the Church between progressive and conservative clergy were linked to the divisions in the anti-Somoza front. The class interests of Somoza's opponents did not coincide. For example, the hierarchy of the Church saw much that was wrong with the excesses and abuses of

Somoza and his cohorts; yet this did not lead the bishops to reject the major organizational tenets of capitalism. They proposed a new, improved, morally just, version of society to solve the glaring inequalities that Somoza's rule had brought to the fore. However, it would be a liberal capitalism run in a more humane or Christian fashion. Not surprisingly, this was precisely the model of society envisioned by the bourgeois opponents of Somoza. On the other hand, the lower clergy, who lived among the people, identified the locus of the problem not solely in the excesses of one corrupt individual or clique of corrupt individuals, but in the whole organizational premise of liberal capitalism[27] and the society it engendered.

Finally, and most importantly from the perspective of this thesis, a group of Christians, relying heavily on themes from Liberation Theology and the Medellin Documents, were openly defending the poor in a manner much more "revolutionary" than the denunciations by the bishops[28] and as such they closed ranks with the more radical opponents of Somoza, the FSLN.

THE ROAD TO REVOLUTION

For analytical purposes, one can divide this next part of Nicaraguan history into three sections: (1) the gathering of the forces of revolution (1974-78); (2) the

phase of armed revolution (1978-79); (3) the phase of reconstruction (1979-80). Each stage is characterized by specific political and ideological turning points, and in each stage the Church is qualitatively different than in the preceding stage. Particular emphasis is placed upon the varied responses the church takes towards the ever-escalating political crisis in Nicaragua. Most importantly, it is shown that the various political actions of the professional religious in Nicaragua, coincide with, and are linked to, the spectrum of political and ideological alternatives held by those who opposed the Somoza regime.

The Gathering of the Forces (1974-78)

Paul Oquist, in Nicaragua, La Lucha Sandinista por la Democracia, identified the following developments at this time in the Nicaraguan political scene: (1) the increasing isolation of Somocismo; (2) the increasing coherence of anti-Somoza opposition and a declining faith in a non-military solution to his rule; (3) the increasing importance of the FSLN as a military alternative.

Political developments within the Church and in the society were accelerated between 1974 and 1978 because Somoza increased the severity of oppression in Nicaragua. The Church found itself more and more involved in defending its rural peasant communities. They protested Guardia

atrocities and brought evidence of these atrocities to the public eye. Consequently, members of the Church became increasingly the object of Guardia violence.[30] Subjected to this increasing oppression, the Church as a whole continued to oppose the Somoza regime, and began to involve itself in finding a solution to the Nicaraguan political crisis. However, the professional religious in the Nicaraguan Church pursued more than one solution to the problem.

On the one hand, grass-roots condemnation of the Somoza regime was intensified by the Capuchin fathers in the province of Zelaya. Penny Lerneoux, in Cry of the People, documents the struggle by the Capuchins to defend the Zelaya peasants against the genocide inflicted by the Guardia in 1976-77.[31] The Capuchins had set up community programs in Zelaya based on the principles of Medellin. Over 275 communities were involved in their programs. The priests and lay leaders taught the peasants how to file land claims, promoted peasant cooperatives in their land ownership schemes, and made peasants more aware of their civil rights. They also continued to compile meticulous accounts of human rights violations by the Guardia, and documented proof of the slaughter of over two hundred peasants. The Capuchins protested these atrocities to the Somoza government. Their documents were eventually submitted as evidence of human rights violations committed by the Somoza government, by Fathers Fernando Cardenal and Miguel

D'Escoto to the U.S. Congress in 1976.[32] D'Excoto would declare to the U.S. Congress:

> To work for justice is profoundly Christian and priestly. The denunciation of injustice is inherent in the message of the gospel. To represent the oppressed and the weak to be the voice of those who have no voice, as it is written in the document of Medellin. (33)

Thus the programs promoted by the Capuchins were not merely political but also more profound ways of being a priest and Christian.

In their criticism of the Nicaraguan government before the U.S. Congress, both Miguel D'Escoto and Fernando Cardenal named Somoza and the Guardia as the sources of oppression in Nicaragua. These priests made no such condemnations of violence by the FSLN. Without claiming allegiance to the FSLN, they argued that the armed struggle against Somoza was the only viable alternative available to his opponents.[34] Thus, in a guarded and roundabout manner, they lent support to the FSLN. Moreover, when in November of 1977 the National Guard destroyed the commune of Solemtiname and killed or imprisoned many of its members, Ernesto Cardenal responded (from exile in Costa Rica),

> The government of Nicaragua has accused me of illicit association with the National Liberation Front of Sandino. Now (Jan. 1978) is the moment which I declare publicly that I do belong to the FSLN, and this is an honour.
>
> I consider it my duty as a poet, and as a priest to belong to this movement. In these

> Latin American countries which are fighting for their liberation, the poet cannot be alien to the struggle of the people, and much less can a priest.
>
> I belong to the FSLN above all because of my fidelity to the gospel. It is because I want a radical and profound change, a new and fraternal society in accord with the teachings of the gospels. It is because I consider this a priestly struggle as Camilo Torres said. (35)

Likewise the Spanish priest Gaspar Garcia Laviana, a Sacred Heart father, resolved to join the FSLN. He cited as the reason for his decision "The ferocious oppression in which the pueblo was living."[36] He wrote in a public letter to the people of Nicaragua dated Christmas 1977,

> As an adopted Nicaraguan, as a priest, I have seen, in the flesh, the wounds of my pueblo; I have seen the wicked exploitation of the campesino, crushed beneath the boot of the landowner who is protected by the National Guard (the instrument of injustice and repression) I have seen how a few have become obscenely rich in the shadow of the Somoza dictatorship, I have witnessed the filthy carnal traffic of youth, delivered into prostitution by the powerful, and I have touched with my own hands the vileness, the mocking, the deceit, the systematic robbery by the Somoza family.
>
> And like our honest youth (the best sons of Nicaragua are at war against the tyrannical oppressor), I have resolved to add myself as the most humble of the F.S.L.N. soldiers. Because it is a just war, and in my Christian conscience it is just, because it represents a struggle against all the things odious to God. And because as the documents of

> Medellin pointed out..."insurrectionary revolution can be legitimate in the case of obvious tyranny...tyranny which endangers the well being of a country, tyranny of a person, or tyranny of obviously unjust social structures.
>
> To all my Nicaraguan brothers, I implore you, in the name of Christ to support the struggle of the Sandanistas. (37)

The emphasis of all of these statements is justice and the creation of a just society. Furthermore each speaker has also made a "Christian" rationalization for their anti-Somoza stance. Their Christian praxis, however, differs greatly from the bishops' moralizing not only because they identify the FSLN (and therefore violence) as a remedy to Somocismo but also because they believe the FSLN to represent the "struggle for the poor".

Although these more radical clergy clearly supported the FSLN, the bishops took a different stance. They continued their denunciation of the regime, but in a more guarded manner. For example, in a pastoral of January 1977 they denounced

> 1) the state of terror that obliges many of our campesinos to desperately flee their homes and farms in the mountains of Zelaya, Matagalpa, and Las Segovias. 2) the accusations and arbitrary detentions by quarrelsome and envious persons, detentions provoked without reason 3)(the bishops used the government) to continue investigations of inhuman treatment, and torture and executions without trial (neither civil nor military) 4) and to verify that many settlements are practically abandoned,

> homes and personal effects burnt, and the people fled without choice.

Referring to direct repression against the Church, the bishops noted

> 1) in some towns in Las Segovias the commandants must give special permission for religious services, 2) in other parts of the mountains of Zelaya and Matagalpa the patrols have occupied the Catholic chapels as barracks, 3) some lay leaders have been intimidated by the Guardia to end cooperation with missionary priests, and some lay leaders have been captured by the army, tortured, and have disappeared. (38)

Note the vagueness and apolitical (moral?) nature of the bishops' comments. These strong statements by the bishops are some of their most specific political statements. Note however, that they continue to see the conflict in the moral order (i.e., the excesses of Guardia members and misuse of the legal system) and the remedy in establishing a more stable government. In no way do they see these activities as symptoms of the deeper structural problems in society.

Consequently (and despite confronting the Somoza regime on the issue of human rights violations), the bishops tended to favour a political as opposed to military solution to the crisis in Nicaragua. In October of 1977, at the request of a group of non-Somoza business elements, Archbishop Obando y Bravo accepted the role of moderator in a "national

dialogue" between various groups seeking to resolve the Nicaraguan crisis. Unfortunately that "national dialogue" excluded the FSLN.[39] The bishop declared that he was "in favour of using civilized channels to avoid new left-right confrontations."[40] The hierarchies' inability to understand the class struggle and the armed solution of the FSLN became more clear when the bishops issued a Christmas pastoral in 1977 condemning violence. They wrote:

> Dialogue may not be sufficient, but it must not falter. It is necessary, and one must proceed with more concrete forms of protest, but always in the spirit of non-violence.... Christians are called to active non-violence in as much as active non-violence is the kind of praxis that permits one to be revolutionary without negating the gospel and permits one to be Christian without negating the revolution. That is, active non-violence permits the construction of a just political society at the same time as the mystical body of Christ. (41)

The bishops' analysis of the political crisis was clear if not simplistic. To them it appeared that the laws of the land were just, and had merely been overstepped by an unjust ruler, and his cronies and wild revolutionaries.[42] Bishop Obando y Bravo, in offering to mediate the political crisis, signified his political preference. His solution, and that of the other bishops, was a return to love and brotherhood by establishing non-violence. Most importantly, their solution coincided with the position of the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie who opposed Somoza.[43] The Nicaraguan bourgeoisie

called "brotherhood" democracy, and urged capitalism, without Somoza, as the solution to the crisis. The bishops' refusal to admit to the existence of class conflict and class strife meant they failed to grasp the real basis of the crisis.

In summary, between 1974 and 1978 a highly visible minority of the lower clergy began to actively participate in the overthrow of the Somoza regime. Their actions ranged from taking up arms and joining the FSLN, to utilizing the legitimacy of their clerical positions to articulate the Sandinista position at political forums both inside and outside Nicaragua. Likewise the hierarchy of the Church increased their denunciation of the regime. But the bishops appeared more concerned to mediate a political solution to the crisis, and rejected an armed or violent uprising. Consequently, the bishops aligned themselves with the opponents of Somocismo who were seeking Somoza's removal by political pressure.

By 1978, the Church had split from the Somoza regime. But how far did it move, and in what direction or directions did it make alliances? We will now look more closely at the development of the political opposition to Somoza, attempting to show more clearly how the spectrum of political solutions found in the Church coincide with, and are linked to, the political alternatives found on the Nicaraguan political scene.

THE ARMED REVOLUTION, 1978-79

There were, in general, four major participants on the Nicaraguan political scene leading up to 1978. First, Somoza, the National Guard, and the loyal cronies who surrounded his dictatorship, and formed the "official" apparatus of the state. This group was responsible for most of the right wing violence and oppression that took place during the 33 months of martial law from 1974-77.[44] By 1978 they had become politically isolated but remained militarily dominant. The second major participant was the Democratic Liberation Union (UDEL). Formed in 1974 by Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, (a fervent Catholic, editor of the opposition newspaper, and long time opponent of Somoza), the party was a coalition of anti-Somoza liberals, conservatives, trade unionists, and the socialist party (PSN). UDEL represented the traditional middle and upper class opponents of Somoza. They rejected armed revolution and backed a political platform of "democratization." (Their opponents within the opposition to Somoza accused them of desiring Somocismo without Somoza.) Oscar Rene Vargas in La Crisis del Somocismo yel Movimiento Obrero Nicaraguense identified these two key principles in the platform of UDEL:

> First, to prepare the conditions of post-Somocismo. Second, to impede, by way of a national pact or coalition of opposition forces, any involvement or overflow by the left (F.S.L.N.) in the bourgeois solution to the economic and political crisis of Nicaragua. (45) (author's translation)

With the assassination of Chamorro in January of 1978, UDEL called for a general strike to protest Somoza's ruthlessness. The Church hierarchy supported the strike, the masses did not. Oscar Vargas explained that this "middle class" strike failed to gain the support of the workers and peasants because the "patrons" who called the strike were the same businessmen who had denied the workers raises and improvements in working conditions during the previous three years.[46]

The days of old Somoza I, when the masses would uncritically support bourgeois opponents to Somoza, had been surpassed. The masses, through oppression and denial, had begun to develop a more indignant and sophisticated class consciousness. It should not be construed, however, that the masses had accepted wholeheartedly the revolutionary alternative offered by the FSLN. In actuality, by 1978 the FSLN remained politically isolated and there was still no clear political leader of the opposition to Somoza.

Nonetheless, the Frente Sandinista de Liberacion Nacional (FSLN or Sandinistas)[47] were a major force on the Nicaraguan political scene. The major political objective of the Sandinistas was to achieve a revolution of socialist

character. Within the FSLN, however, there developed three factions. In 1975 the original Popular Prolonged War Tendency (GPP) split from the proletarian tendency over a difference pertaining to strategy (the GPP wanted a longer, prolonged war waged in the countryside vs. the proletarian tendencies' preference for urban political organization). A third group was formed,the Terceristas. While attempting to mediate between these two groups, they eventually became the largest of the three groups. The Terceristas differed from the other two more staunchly Marxist Sandinista factions because they advocated a strategy of alliance with the progressive opponents of Somoza. This tactic of making strategic alliances with the bourgeois opponents of Somoza was intended to quicken the downfall of the regime. The Terceristas would play a most important part during the revolution by uniting the FSLN with the other opponents of Somoza (especially with the middle class and bourgeois opponents).

It was not until October 1977, however, that a group emerged within the middle and bourgeois class opponents of Somoza willing to forsake a deal with Somoza (for a solution to the crisis) and make a political rapproachment with the FSLN. This group, known as Los Doce (The Twelve), was composed of prominent businessmen, academics, professionals and two priests (Fr. Miguel D'Escoto, a MaryKnoller, and Fr. Fernando Cardenal S.J.). These are the same two priests

who condemned Somoza before the U.S. Congress in 1976). Los Doce recognized the need for an armed uprising against Somoza and became "the ideological catalyst for rapprochement between the traditional opposition to Somoza and the FSLN."[48] Los Doce discerned the pueblo's growing revolutionary consciousness and indignation towards bourgeois politics. As such, Los Doce proposed the inclusion of all sectors of Nicaraguan politics in the reconstruction of a new society, regardless of social class or political ideology.

Los Doce had accurately identified this growing anti-Somoza consciousness among the masses. Throughout the years 1974-78 less prominent, but ever increasing forms of opposition to the Somoza regime took place. Emerging as community mobilizations, barrio committees, workers' groups, student movements, etc., these popular organizations politicized issues ranging from neighbourhood demands for services, to protests against inflation, unemployment, injustice and repression. Orlando Nunez Soto, in The Third Force in National Liberation points out how these organizations were founded on democratic concerns for public welfare and became revolutionary as the Nicaraguan crisis heightened. He writes,

> With the development of the mass organizations social hegemony began to change, and Sandinismo replaced Somocismo as the

> legitimate force in the eyes of the Nicaraguan people. The questioning of Somocismo waged by these mass movements had an important voice in the organised journalists of all national media. The questioning began with a democratic character and progressively became revolutionary. The complaints became increasingly sharp and daring anti-government criticism. The marches and demonstrations of the women, journalists, shanty-town dwellers, students and peasants became takeovers of schools, churches, and public buildings.
>
> In the beginning the mass movements were promoted by the bourgeois opposition. They were fully supported by the bourgeois media and even by the Catholic Church. The existence of movements with democratic demands is nothing out of the ordinary in and of itself, what is unusual is that these movements converted themselves into forces of support for the revolutionary struggles. Once again in the case of these movements, their actual revolutionary practice does not coincide with their class origins. These mass social movements with the broad support of the urban and rural middle classes contributed to the preparation of the conditions that resulted in full popular support of the insurrection. (49)

These groups represented a major underlying political force in Nicaraguan politics. UDEL, Los Doce, the FSLN and these popular groups would converge in a sustained popular revolt against the Somoza regime in 1978-79.

The Revolt Begins

In May of 1978 the Broad Opposition Front (FAO) was established. The front was an anti-Somoza tactical alliance covering a broad political spectrum including UDEL, Los Doce and political parties and trade unions not in UDEL.[50] When on August 22, 1978 the FSLN captured a number of the country's leading citizens, the FAO called a general strike in support of the action. The country was thrown into chaos. On September 9, popular insurgents occupied the towns of Matagalpa, Estrelli, Leon, Granda, and Chinandega. They were joined by Sandinista units.

The Guardia was particularly brutal in their attempts to recapture these towns. They indiscriminantly bombed the towns and villages, killing townspeople and revolutionaries alike. Thousands fled to become refugees in Costa Rica or Honduras and over 10,000 casualties were recorded. By September 21st the Guardia had recaptured all the towns, leading the people to call this month of Guardia action "Bloody September." The entire country had become polarized against the regime.

The FAO tried to negotiate with Somoza for a solution to the violence. On September 30th the FAO accepted the Somoza plan of outside mediators (Somoza picked the U.S.A., Guatemala and the Dominican Republic). On October 20th, the U.S. named W.G. Bowdler as mediator. By October 29th, however, the more radical members of the FAO (Los Doce and

the Social Christian parties) withdrew from the coalition (leaving it dominated by the traditional non-Somoza business elements). Los Doce declared on their withdrawal from the FAO, "the mediation has become converted into intervention." And reiterating their support of the FSLN, they declared (in an FSLN publication of 1 November 1978), "it is A.C. Sandino, it is he who points out the route forward--we must reject external intervention"[51] (author's translation)

By January of 1979 those groups disenchanted with the FAO had banded together to form the National Patriotic Front (FPN). The FPN enjoyed a large popular base, was much more radical than the FAO, and vehemently opposed "Somocismo without Somoza" (that is the U.S. proposed solution to the problem). The FPN, led by Los Doce, began to openly support the Sandinistas.

Solidarity between politically antithetical groups was a significant feature of the Nicaraguan revolution. As Nunez Soto argued, "revolutionary practice did not coincide with class interests." It was the tactical alliances between the anti-Somoza bourgeoisie and the Tercerista faction of the FSLN that gave the revolution a homogeneous and popular appearance. Indeed, during the final offensive of May-June 1979 a relatively small guerilla force (a few thousand and poorly armed) defeated a formidable military dictatorship because they were joined by thousands of insurgent townspeople. This remarkably pluralistic revolu-

tionary force was held together by its common opposition to Somoza (led by the FSLN) and united in the ideological nationalism of Sandinismo (as their armed wing).

To understand the role of religion in the revolution we must look more closely at the political accord between the Tercerista's and the bourgeois opponents of Somoza. The Latin American Bureau, in Nicaragua-Dictatorship and Revolution, reports that the Tercerista's tactical alliances with other non-traditional opposition groups derived from their awareness of a growing anti-Somoza sentiment in society. LAB reports,

> The Terceristas pointed to the dissaffection among many businessmen, to the new mood of opposition in the Church, which had seeped upwards from the missionary priests in the hills to the Bishops' Conferences, to the new united organization amongst the opposition parties, and most importantly, to the increasing signs of new militancy among ordinary peasants and townspeople. (52)

On the bourgeois side of the alliance the group Los Doce acted as a catalyst in this political rapprochement between the FAO, FPN and the Terceristas.[53] When this group of twelve businessmen, intellectuals, and priests returned to Nicaragua in July 1978 from exile in Costa Rica, they were greeted by over a hundred thousand people. Their widespread popular support, combined with a political platform which advocated representation in the reconstruction government by all groups who effectively participated in the

insurrection, made Los Doce an attractive go between both for the Terceristas and the more traditional private sector bourgeoisie.

The popular nature of the revolution, and the multi-class pluralistic nature of the reconstruction government is evidence of this tactical alliance between the FSLN and the other opponents of Somoza. But it is one thing to say that these groups came together in a tactical alliance against Somoza, and another to identify the common ground of trust between these politically contrary groups.

To a great extent the involvement of the pro-Sandinista clergy Miguel D'Escoto and Fernando Cardenal in Los Doce persuaded the FSLN to trust in the genuineness of the group. As a result of their activities prior to (and during) the revolution, and the practice of other priests during the struggle, and combined with the massive influx of Catholic youths into the FSLN during the final stages of the revolutions, the guerillas seemed convinced that these individual Christians were going through the same radicalization process as the Sandinistas. Evincing this trust in the clergy, the FSLN placed seven priests in the reconstruction government.[54] Fr. Miguel D'Escoto (presently Minister of Foreign Relations in the Sandinista Government) explains this thawing of Marxist-Christian enmity:

> In the beginning, the Sandinist Front of National Liberation was Marxist and anti-clerical, perhaps because a process of Christianization had not yet begun in the Nicaraguan Catholic Church, and it was identified with the interests of the privileged class. But with our evangelical radicalization, placing ourselves on the side of the poor and oppressed, and not betraying Christ so much, the Front opened itself to Christians because they believed the Church an important factor in the struggle for liberation and because they realized they were wrong in believing that only a Marxist could be revolutionary. Thus the front acquired maturity and it became authentically Sandinist. (55)

D'Escoto provides an important insight for our thesis: (1) that the evangelical developments since Medellin had changed the religious reasons for Christian activities and that this had the concomitant political effect of bringing the clergy into conflict with Somoza. Moreover, because the social economic conditions mitigated against promoting the poor, the priests found themselves attacking social structures. It is at this point that D'Escoto sees the conjuncture of social economic forces and ecclesiastical changes providing a new basis for trust between Marxists and Christians.

Moises Hassan, a member of the postwar reconstruction government, adds to this analysis from the point of view of the FSLN. He writes,

> Catholic men and women have been important to the success of the revolution...Up until a few years ago the Catholic clergy were steadily

> losing ground because most were associated with Somoza's power. The old Bishop was strictly one of Somoza's men. This new Obando (Archbishop Obando y Bravo of Managua) introduced change in the way the Church looked at the problems of Nicaragua. Although we cannot call him revolutionary, he was not Somoza's man. He was aware of the problems created by the Somoza regime. He was in a mild way opposed to Somoza. So we can say that the Church in the last few years has been playing a role, not exactly a revolutionary role... but it was at least anti-Somoza. (However) I think those priests who decided to commit themselves to the revolution in Nicaragua played an important role. They were able to use their credibility among the Nicaraguan people. The Catholic Church remains a real power in Nicaragua...And in recognition of the participation by these clergy and laity in the struggle for liberation, the FSLN has assigned them highly important responsibilities in the process of the revolutionary construction (56) (author's translation)

Note how Hassan makes a clear distinction between reformist clergy (the bishops) and revolutionary clergy (the lower clergy). Note also how it was the revolutionary clergy who were recognized for their participation. Thus he supports our thesis that individual clergy and laity by participating in the ranks of the FSLN and other anti-Somoza groups, could have provided the groundwork of trust that brought the left and right amongst the opposition together. Listen to the FSLN commander, Luis Carrion, speaking of the Christian participation in the revolution:

> The theme of this seminar, What should Christians hope of the FSLN? and What should the FSLN expect of Christians?, strikes me peculiar for various reasons. First, this situation never arose during the revolutionary

> process, Christian revolutionaries, like all Nicaraguan revolutionaries, incorporated themselves in the struggle, found themselves in the FSLN ranks, and the field has always been open to their participation in the struggle, without discrimination. Christians have always had representatives in the FSLN. From this point of view a confrontation is not necessary, speaking historically, between Christian revolutionaries and the FSLN, because they have always been present in our process of struggle. (57) (author's translation)

Once again we find the mix of Christian and revolutionary to be a normal one. Thus it was proven to the FSLN by experience that they could not categorically reject alliances with Christians or priests because they were not (or could not because of their faith) be revolutionaries.

Elaborating on his vision of the role of the new Church in Nicaragua, we can see how Commander Carrion's vision is synonymous with the idea of "Church" held by the more radical priests.[58] Carrion writes,

> The Christian churches, for the most part, were utilized as instruments of the dominant class....I believe the revolutionary Christians were the first to see this historical role. And this recognition is indispensible to Christianity, as a current philosophy and religion, to incorporate itself in the revolutionary process...This means that revolutionary Christians must deinstrumentalize religion ...and combat the use of deformed religious ideas, which are detached from the process of history and the interests and needs of the people... (59) (author's translation)

Carrion doesn't reject religion as long as these revolutionary priests deinstrumentalize it and keep it in line with the interests of the poor--and he believes they can do so because they were the first to recognize the contradictions in the old Church.

And in a personal note, that adds substance to our thesis of how religious beliefs can lead to radical praxis, Commander Carrion describes his own radicalization process and recognizes the same process taking place in the Church. He writes,

> I approached the revolution through a religious experience. My first motivations were of this kind. My first approximations of the concept of justice, and my first discovery of identity with the people, followed this road. My own convictions have since become more profound...but in spite of my accusation that much of the Church used religion for its own instrumental ends, I must emphasize they were also on the road to revolution. (60) (author's translation)

Further evidence of the FSLN's awareness of a radicalization process among clergy and laity parallel to their own experiences, can be found in the FSLN position paper on religion published in October 1980. Besides including freedom of religion in the Bill of Rights, they wrote,

> Some authors have affirmed that religion is a mechanism of alienation among men that justifies the exploitation of one class by another. This affirmation undoubtedly has historical validity,

> in that, in specific historical epochs religion served to theoretically support political domination. It is sufficient to remember the role the missionaries played in the process of colonization and domination of our indigenous people. Nevertheless, we Sandinistas affirm, and our own experience demonstrates, that when Christians, supported by their faith, are capable of responding to the needs of their society and of history, their own beliefs impel them to revolutionary militancy. Our experience demonstrates that one can be a believer and a revolutionary at the same time, and there is no insoluable contradiction between these things. (61) (author's translation)

Adding further sustenance to the growing bond between revolutionary Christians and Marxists, the FSLN authors continued,

> A great quantity of militants and combatants in the FSLN found in the interpretation of their faith the motivation to incorporate themselves in the revolutionary struggle and as a consequence, in the FSLN....These Christians have become, moreover, an integral part of our revolutionary history, in a degree heretofore unheard of in any other Latin American revolutionary movement, and possibly in the world. This deed opens new and interesting possibilities--not only in the struggle for power but also in construction of a new society. (62) (author's translation)

In short, during the 1970s, as the masses shifted to the left, the militant priests had to make a fundamental choice. Support the third way or mediated solution sought by the bishops or argue that Marxism and Christianity were not incompatible. They chose the latter. Likewise the Sandinistas had to make a similar choice. Accept non-Marxist

opponents of Somoza as allies or fight a prolonged and isolated guerilla war against Somoza. They chose to develop alliances with the non-Marxists. To a great extent the praxis of everyday life brought these two disparate groups together. Each became aware of the other's genuine struggle to bring about a better society. Remember, these militant priests did not participate as groups but as individuals within groups of other militants. By working in solidarity within already existing groups, individual clergy did not pose the threat of an external clerical ideology upon the group, but developed their own ideals in the revolutionary practice of the group. What is clear is that the profound Christianization of the Church, and its new "option for the poor "brought the Church into an historical conjuncture with the forces for revolution in Nicaragua, and found expression in the activities of these priests.

The Rapprochement of Religion and Politics

The FSLN led and won the Nicaraguan revolution by force of arms. Theirs was the first successful armed revolt in Latin America since Castro's Cuba in 1959. But in contrast to Cuba, where the Church played no role in the new government, the Nicaraguan reconstruction junta included numerous priests and laity. Furthermore, numerous members

of the middle classes and individual entrepreneurs from the bourgeoisie became part of this pluralistic reconstruction government. The inclusion of these groups in the reconstruction government was a direct result of their involvement in the revolutionary process. The Sandinistas, who control the majority of seats in government, are the first to admit that it makes good economic sense to maintain a small private sector, and good international politics to have priests sitting in a revolutionary government. Nevertheless to insist that this is mere window dressing is perverse cynicism. Indeed some analysts[63] even insist that the presence of non-proletarian groups in the revolutionary government undermines the objective conditions of the revolt. But reliance on "academic theorems" overlooks the dynamics of the tactical alliances that were the very essence of popular revolution in Nicaragua.

During the revolution there was definitely a mutual conditioning of interests between the left and right within the opposition to Somoza. In the main this uneasy alliance was motivated by the FSLN's desire for a quick victory over Somoza and the bourgeoisie's desire to protect its private interests under a reconstruction government. As no one group was clearly capable of leading the revolution, a coalition of the guerilla forces with the political forces was necessary in order to forge an alliance capable of overthrowing the dictatorship.[64]

Religion provided a common bond to this uneasy alliance and made it more trustworthy. The Christian humanistic ideals of brotherhood, equality, sharing, and freedom lent themselves to different interpretations and uses by the left and right within the opposition forces. Religion and religious statements, because of their ambiguity, were available, in terms of ideological manipulation, to use by either of these traditionally antithetical political positions. Of course one cannot deny that religious ideology can and has been used for contrary and self-interested reasons. But in our case religious ideology also allowed antithetical groups to come together in a homogeneous front, at a specific historical juncture, without fracturing solidarity.

A mutual conditioning of interests took place between reformists and revolutionaries in the Somoza opposition front and built upon the notion that all good Christians had to oppose the moral excesses of the Somoza regime and build a more Christian society (both groups were in the last instance Christians or, in the case of the FSLN, contained some religiously motivated participants). Thus the bourgeois sectors, drawing on the more Christian democratic statements of the bishops, could find legitimacy for their inclusion in a popular democracy. Conversely, the FSLN, building upon the same religious tenets of equality and the "preferential option for the poor" as the bishops

and bourgeoisie, could find religious legitimation for their schemes of a controlled private sector, mass education, and massive land redistribution. Moreover, the FSLN drew upon the more radical lower clergy to legitimate and lead their programs. (Fr. Fernando Cardenal headed the Literacy Program and Fr. Parrales heads the Social Welfare Programs.)

Religion, then, provided some common ideological ground for the participants in the revolution. All the common ground was not religious; religion did not lead the revolution. But, contrary to the objective analysis of a reductionist materialism, the Nicaraguan revolution showed that religious ideology can play an important, supportive role in revolution. In the last instance economic conditions may have necessitated that religion play such an important, extraeconomic role. Nevertheless, it is important to note that in historically specific situations, and under certain objective structural conditions, religion may provide for, and sustain revolutionary practice.

A second major conclusion that this analysis provided us was that the ideology and praxis of bishops and priests not only reflected, but was linked to the radicalization of society. But in Nicaraguan society there were both reformist and (revolutionary) socialist tendencies. Examining the various political factions that opposed Somoza, we found a spectrum ranging from the reformists in the FAO and UDEL,

to the more radical members of Los Doce, the FPN, and the three falanges of the FSLN. The same spectrum existed within the Catholic Church. The bishops sought a non-military, political solution to the crisis and supported actions initiated by the FAO and UDEL. On the other hand, the lower clergy either joined the FSLN directly, became their spokesmen, or supported political groups such as Los Doce, which in the final days worked to consolidate the alliance between the FSLN and the other opponents of Somoza. Fr. Arguello points out, "at the grassroots level, religious people not actually fighting aided the insurrection by risking their lives to provide food, medicine, message service, and shelter. Some priests gave moral and ideological support by giving lectures on the responsibilities of Christians in revolutionary situations. At least two led troops in combat; other religious worked as cooks and nurses, etc."[65]

In order to explain the different class interests[66] of lower clergy versus higher clergy, we must examine the linkages between class interest and the everyday activities of these priests. It is too simplistic to reduce their various class interests to class background (i.e., to follow the materialist assertion that ideology reflects class background). Indeed many of the most radical priests came from wealthy, upper class backgrounds.[67] For the lower clergy, their ideological stance stems from their contact

with, and immersion in the everyday struggles of the people of Nicaragua. Trying to live the gospel in the midst of oppression and terror, these priests developed new definitions of duty and commitment. They found themselves defending their people against the repressive tactics of the Guardia. Most importantly, they came to realize that prayers could not stop bullets. Originally the priests were open to a political solution. They decided that this was not feasible, however, because as they sat at the negotiation table with Somoza, he continued to massacre those leaders who came forward to mediate a solution to the crisis. Finally, the priests themselves became considered subversives. We see,then, that the class interests of the priests could be derived from their proximity to the people. For example, their activities were oriented towards denunciation of the regime and criticism of the social system as "institutionalized" sin. These are not merely phrases they picked up in European seminaries or learned reading theology, but insights acquired in the everyday struggles they faced alongside the poor. And as the masses became more radicalized, the priests appeared more and more willing to involve themselves in radical activities. In the end, their condemnation of Somoza and capitalism, and their support for the FSLN, derives not merely from their Christian commitment to the poor, but more so, from their attempts to live a Christian life alongside the poor of Nicaragua under the repressive

rule of Anastasio Somoza. In this sense ideology and praxis come together to form a new, more radical ideology, and consequently new ways of acting in the world. Miguel D Escoto explains this process of radicalization:

> There is no doubt that the clergy and apostolic community of sisters and brothers and lay apostles etc. Catholic and non-Catholic played an important role (in the revolution). These are people who acted, I think, because of their proximity, their close association with the poor, because of their basic goodness, who acted in spite of all the brainwashing that often takes place in the seminary, or the convent.
>
> After all, the problem has been that for a long time many ecclesiastical documents on social justice, or even, say, the documents on Marxism were not documents based on Gospel inspired values, but rather on the values of liberalism. That's why you find that the Church has allowed capitalism to jump into its own bed. I think this is the greatest sin of the Church for 150 years. I don't think there could be a greater enemy to Christianity than capitalism.
>
> But in spite of that, I think we have been Christianized. The instrument that was used to expedite the process of recommitment to the poor was the Frente Sandinista de Liberacion Nacionale, political liberation and religious liberation, too. Christian life needs sacraments to keep it flourishing. I think the greatest sacrament, and the most privileged tabernacle for the presence of God in the world is the poor. The closer you are to that sacramental presence of God in the world--the poor--the more vigorous and alive your faith remains. (68)

D'Escoto appears to be saying that the closer you are to the poor the more vigorously you fight for their interests

because your proximity makes their interests your interests.

On the other hand, the class interests of the bishops tended to coincide with those of the bourgeoisie. For example, the bishops, like the upper classes, were more distant from the poor. The very nature of the Church as an organization placed the bishops in regional and national capitals. They pastored the best (and the richest) churches, and consequently had among their congregations the upper echelons of Nicaraguan society. Historically these bourgeois classes had provided the politicians who opposed Somoza. Therefore, the decision of the bishops, first to mediate a national dialogue between these politicians or national business leaders and the Somoza regime, and secondly to support the political solutions put forth by the traditional parties in the FAO and UDEL, revealed a partisan choice that could be linked to their proximity to these classes.

In a sense the hierarchy of the Church was experiencing a genuine fear for the survival of the Church as they envisaged it. If the bishops didn't come forward to protest Somoza's excesses the Church would have lost all credibility with the masses. On the other hand, the bishops feared supporting the FSLN against Somoza because the FSLN was atheist. Obviously their fear could have stemmed from the dismal situation of the Church in present day Cuba. Yet the lower clergy, who interacted with the revolutionary

forces of the FSLN, recognized no threat in their atheism; on the contrary in the humanism of the Sandinistas they found, as D'Escoto pointed out, an instrument of religious liberation. The bishops' denial of the FSLN (and the lower clergy's acceptance) is not merely a simple class interest reflex but also stems from their contrasting ideas of religion and religious practice.

For example, as late as 1978 the bishops were still arguing against the violence by both sides in the Nicaraguan struggle.[68] The Church hierarchy had, however, become more and more involved in anti-Somoza demonstrations. But their commitment towards a new society was always fuzzy and vague. They continued to deny their support to the guerillas. Manual Salazar Espinoza, president of the Nicaraguan Episcopal Conference, said in an interview following the Church-supported hunter strikes of February 1978, "the Church, as a Church, would not become sponsors or patrons of a guerilla movement but would collaborate in organizing the pueblo, which has been traditionally disorganized." And in the same interview, Monseignor Vega announced, "We are not an 'anti' group, but a group of judgement or appraisal. We look for injustice, not because we want to increase the class struggle but because justice is an imperative in our society."[70] Note, however, the total reluctance to grasp the root cause of class conflict.

Despite their reformist nature, the bishops' denuncia-

tion contributed greatly to Somoza's isolation from world support.[71] In February of 1979 the Somoza government accused the bishops of promoting Communism, calling them "little red fishes in holy water." Somoza's ministers charged the bishops with "interfering in politics and attempting to destabilize the regime...by employing the theology of liberation, which is essentially a Marxist theology."[72] Despite constant condemnation of the regime, it was not until June 1979 that Bishop Obando y Bravo declared the guerilla movement legitimate in the eyes of the Church. He wrote, "All of us are affected by the extremes of revolutionary insurrection...Nevertheless, it is not possible to deny the moral and judicial legitimacy of such insurrection in the case of prolonged tyranny that destroys fundamental human rights and endangers the common good of the nation."[73] The timing of the bishops' support for the FSLN, however, made good political sense for a group of men who feared Marxism and wished to maintain religion as a force in Nicaraguan society. Negotiations with Somoza seemed hopeless, the United States had failed to negotiate an OAS overthrow of Somoza, the FSLN had announced and commenced their final armed push, the populace was showing strong support for the FSLN, giving the Front a truly pluralist and nationalist composition. In other words, the revolution was by this time as much populist as Marxist and the Church could openly support it, apparently based on

moral criteria, because it was no longer an atheistic revolution.

In summary, even though both the hierarchy and the lower clergy played an important role in Somoza's downfall, they were each motivated by different class interests and different ecclesiastical viewpoints. The bishops and the higher clergy were clearly linked to the traditional anti-Somoza bourgeoisie, for the most part opposed a Sandinista-led revolution and believed in a more conservative theology. The lower clergy, however, were closer to the poor of the country, made political commitments which reflected that proximity to the poor, and were commited to liberation theology.

A third major observation is that the Church in Nicaragua remained split, and that split is predicated on contrary class interests and contrary ideas of faith and religious practice. The bishops exasperated the split in May of 1980, when they ordered all priests involved in government to resign their posts as of December, 1980. The bishops argued that priests should restrict their activities to priestly duties and turn over their political duties to laypersons. Welfare Minister, Fr. Edgar Parrales, responded,

> My role in the government comes from my moral commitment. We are not simply talking about politics. We are talking about morality and the gospel. Go into the poor neighbourhoods where the priests have to face hunger and misery on a daily basis, and see if they too

> are not participating in the revolution. Then look at those who are looking down their noses at the revolutionary process. There are fears, doubts, lots of words, but very little action and very little identification with the common people. (74)

Once again we see the separation of religion and politics made in the minds of the bishops, as opposed to the basic unity of religion and politics as perceived by the lower clergy.

The New York Times reported on December 10, 1980,

> that the Church's attitude was not so much centered on the political activities of these priests but on the leftward drift of the government and its possible effect on religious freedom."

The Times continued:

> as political differences between government and business and political opposition groups have sharpened, the Church hierarchy has increasingly become identified with critics who complain that the regime is moving too far and too fast to the left...the bishops' statements seem to reflect a concern for the growing class struggle here, the absence of religious education in public schools and for supposed official efforts to erode the religious character of some festivals. (75)

Just as they criticized the moral excesses of Somoza, the bishops continued to be concerned for and criticize the moral and theistic qualities of the revolutionary government. But Fr. Parrales of the reconstruction government argued that the bishops' 'theological' and moral concerns

were really political concerns. He declared, "They (the bishops) are tacitly linked to groups that have lost the possibility of power in Nicaragua...the revolution they want is a preservation of classes, of privileged groups, of traditional family and economic elites within a general capitalist context."[76] Fr. Parrales' comments reveal the clear class choice he has made, and also is a fine example of the type of logical analysis that the lower clergy have appropriated from their synthesis of Marxism and theology.

Fr. Fernando Cardenal, S.J., a member of Los Doce and presently Director of the Literacy Program of the Nicaraguan Reconstruction Government, spoke further about this split in a talk given in Toronto in October 1980. Fr. Cardenal spoke of how religion was being misused by some opponents of the regime in an attempt to discredit the Sandinistas. Listen to him as he addresses the question of why the Sandinistas rarely mention 'God':

> The preferential option for the poor is one of the most profound sentiments at the heart of the Nicaraguan revolution. It is this feeling of love for the poor that is at the root of the revolutionary commitment and understanding of the first leaders of the Sandinista movement.
>
> They don't talk a great deal about God. And there are some people who beforehand never spoke about God, but who now worry and complain because one doesn't speak of God. I believe that these gentlemen are violating one of the

> most basic commandments of the sacred scripture which is, "Thous shalt not take the name of the Lord in vain." Because they don't have the courage to say, "I'm against the revolution because it's going to reduce my profits." That would be a gross thing to say. So instead they say "I'm against the revolution because it doesn't talk about God, because these people are atheists." Yet under Somoza, they never worried whether he was theist or an atheist...and Somoza always talked about God.
>
> So, in the Nicaraguan revolution one doesn't normally speak a great deal about God, yet as a priest I wish to testify that as far as I can see, God has never been so present in Nicaragua as now. I find God in the love of the Sandinistas, in the forgiveness they extended their enemies, in the many hours a day they work to raise the standard of living of our people, and in our heroic youth who devoted themselves to the literracy struggle. (77)

In short the clergy closer to the revolutionary front have decided that there is nothing incompatible between Marxism and Christianity, because both are oriented towards promoting the poor, whereas the hierarchy seems intent on preserving a notion of religion that has been eclipsed by the revolution.[78]

A fourth conclusion focuses upon the influence of Liberation Theology on the actions of the clergy and laity during the revolution. The many statements and letters we presented were pregnant with the ideas and themes (such as the preferential option for the poor) found in Liberation Theology. But these ecclesiastical changes became signifi-

cant only when they coincided with some of the major structural changes taking place in Nicaragua. Only at these specific conjunctures did religion reveal its revolutionary potential in the activities of religiously motivated priests and laity. As Fr. Fernando Cardenal noted,

> Nicaragua had the good luck to have its revolution after the Second Vatican Council. And this really did have a great importance because at the time that the final struggle against Somoza was taking place, there were thousands of Christians who understood that the gospel does not require us to only sit and think about the other life while in this life our brothers and sisters are dying of hunger. Thousands of Christians have come to understand that we should begin to build the Kingdom here on earth even if it has its fullness in the life hereafter. It is an illusion to think about the other life when we haven't worked for our brothers and sisters in this life. (79)

Interestingly, however, the themes of Liberation Theology, Medellin and Vatican Two were used by both priests and bishops to legitimate contrary political activities. The reformist tendencies of the hierarchy as opposed to the revolutionary ones of the lower clergy reveal the complex manner in which ideology and objective social forces came together in social praxis. Thus, our examination of the various conjunctures of ideology and social forces during the Nicaraguan revolution revealed that no simple materialist or idealist theory of revolution can predict or explain

fully the vagaries of history.

Much academic theorizing has also centered on the rapprochement between Marxism and Christianity in Latin America (and especially in the work of the Liberation Theologians). The Sandinista revolution provides concrete evidence of this rapprochement and some of the first examples of the kinds of revolutionary actions it can promote. Fr. Miguel D'Escoto offers his personal feelings on the meeting between these two philosophies or ways of life during the Nicaraguan revolution:

> We are Sandinistas as much as we are nationalists, we are committed to defending our rights of self-determination to the end. We are Christian people, though we don't go around like Somoza did, putting labels on and having chaplains for the government. We don't manipulate Christianity; it is something woven very deeply into the fibre of our Nicaraguan identity. Also we think Sandinist Marxism has made a terrific contribution to the world in providing us with the most--I am speaking now for myself--adequate instrument for analysis and understanding the dynamics and contradictions in post-industrial revolution society.... About Marxism, I think of it as being one of the greatest blessings on the Church. It has been the divine whip to bring the Church back. Let me speak from my perspective, that the leftist revolutions have never persecuted Christians for being faithful to the Gospel, that it is the rightist governments that sometimes are so pleasing to many of our distinguished bepurpled brothers (i.e., the bishops), that these are the ones who persecute the authentic Church....Quietism is much more readily anti-Christian. (80)

The litmus test for the depth of the cross-fertilization

between Christianity and Marxism has traditionally revolved around the question of violence. More specifically, the question "Can a Christian take another person's life in the name of God?" Miguel D'Escoto comments:

> Violence is a question that we are very concerned about, and it would be criminal to use it if there are other means that would work to bring about freedom of the people. But if those means have not been developed, can you blame a people for not using tools that are not there? And that you never cared enough to develop and to put at their disposal?
>
> There's no doubt that I believe very much in the idea that creative or active non-violence ought to be regarded as a constitutive element in evangelization, in the proclamation of the Gospel.
>
> In Nicaragua, however, it was hypocritical--when people could no longer stand it, when they were drowning, suffocated by the system--to tell them that non-violence was the only way.
>
> But I don't believe in the non-violence of those who only criticize guerillas, it seems that if you have atom bombs and huge weapons, it's moral, you call it war. But if you have only homemade bombs, machetes, it's violence, guerilla, extremists, all the American jargon, terrorism they call it. (81)

This is a very Christian analysis. In the Catholic Church there are both sins of omission and sins of commission. D'Escoto is arguing that those who urged non-violence were sinning because they failed to grasp the contradiction in what they were saying and doing (i.e., in their non-action they were condoning the slaughter of

people). On the other hand, D'Escoto is suggesting that committing violence may not be a sin, but a duty under certain conditions. Thus it is not an unreasonable assumption that by committing the greatest sin of taking another man's life, the Christian rebel partook of the liberation process. Moreover, it is plausible that the rebel did so with a clear conscience and religious conviction. In this sense they were militant Christians who became militant because all other Christian possibilities were taken away from them by a system they came to identify as sinful. They are not merely militant Christians who have crossed over to become Marxists, but they are also more profoundly Christian. In their actions they are forging new ground and have superceded any theoretical polemics about the compatability of these two ideologies, Marxism and Christianity. The question "Are these priests Marxists?" becomes a non-question (at least in Nicaragua) because the clergy see no contradictions between their actions and the actions the Sandinistas have taken to promote the poor. If confronted with a choice between democracy and socialism, I believe these clergy would choose the one which would best promote the Nicaraguan people as a whole, because the people are the locus of their Christian concern.

FOOTNOTES

1. See Jose Comblin, The Church and the National Security State, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1979, Chapters 2 and 3. See also Emmanuel DeKadt, Church, Society and Development in Latin America, Journal of Development Studies, passim.

2. For a more detailed analysis of the Nicaraguan economy from a dependency perspective see Jaime Wheelock, Imperialismo y Dictatura, Siglo XXI, Mexico 1975.

3. Ibid., see Chapter 5 for discussion of class structure and economy.

4. For a good discussion of this general point, see James Rhinehart, The Tyranny of Work, Academic Press Canada, 1975, Chapter 2.

5. Thomas Walker, History of the Christian Democratic Movement in Nicaragua, Arizona Press, 1970.

6. Op.cit., DeKadt, passim.

7. Latorre Cabal, The Rebel Church in Latin America, p. 83.

8. Ibid., passim.

9. Instituto de Estudies Politicos para America Latina y Africa (IEPALA), Nicaragua El Pueblo Vence a La Dinastia Madrid 1979. See entire section on Sandino and modern FFSLN movement. See also Humberto Ortega's 50 Anos de Lucha Sandinista, Direccion Nacional del Frente Sandinista de Liberacion Nacional, 1978.

10. Edoardo Crawley, Dictators Never Die, New York: St. Martin's, 1979, pp. 134. See also Facts on File for Nicaragua, 1967-68.

11. Tennant C. Wright, "ERnesto Cardenal and the Humane Revolution in Nicaragua", America, December 15, 1979.

12. Ernesto Cardenal, The Gospel in Solemtiname, 3 vols. Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1976, 1978, 1979. Vol. 1, pp. 224-225.

13. Op.cit., IEPALA, p. 92.

14. Op.cit., Crawley, p. 145.

15. Op.cit., Facts on File, Nicaragua, 1971.

16. Op.cit., Humberto Ortega, passim.

17. Amaro Barahona Portocarrero, "Estudio Sobre La Historia Contemporanea de Nicaragua" in Revista del Pensamiento CentroAmericano, Vol. 32, p. 45.

18. Op.cit., Crawley, p. 146.

19. Enrique Dussel, De Medellin a Puebla, Una Decada de Sangre y Esperana, 1968-79. Editorial Edicol, Mexico, 1979. p. 236.

20. Ibid., p. 237.

21. Op.cit., Portocarrero, p. 45, speaking of the effect of Somoza's misappropriation of earthquake funds, he wrote: "without a doubt, the methods of the Somoza family (their practice of using state mechanisms to further their wealth and weaken other capital competition) have provoked some loosening up, some indifference, by the bourgeois opposition to Somoza and a pleading for his resignation, a return to a vigilance of human and civil rights (permissible under the capitalist system), and the cessation of corruption in the administration of the state.

22. Op.cit., Dussel, p. 404.

23. Ibid., p. 405.

24. Op.cit., Crawley, p. 152.

25. Op.cit., Dussel, p. 405. This poem by Fr. Ernesto Cardenal speaks of the sanctity of the revolution. His works were widely read during the struggle, and I have left it in the original Spanish to do the language justice.

Somos subversivos

cifras secreta en untarjeta en un archivo quien sabe donde
seguidores del proletario mal vestido y visionario, agitador
professional, ejecutado por conspirar contra El systema.
Era, usted sabe, un supliciodestinado a los subversivos
la cruz, a los reos politicos, no una alhaja de rubies
en el pecho de on obispo.
  Lo profano no existe mas.
El no esta mas alla de los cielos atmosfericos.

Que importa, monsenor, si la Policia Militar o LaCIA
nos convierte en elimiento de las bacterias del suelo
y nos dispersas por todo el universo.
  Pilatos puso el letrero en 4 idiomas: subversivo.
Uno apresado en la panaderia,
Otro esperando un bus para ir a trabajo
Un muchacho del pelo largo cae en una calle de Sao Paulo
Hay resurreccion de la carne. Si no
como puede haber revolucion permanente?

26. Ibid., Dussel, p. 405.

27. See my Chapter II on Liberation Theology.

28. Op.cit., IEPALA, section on Church and religion has excellent analysis of bishops' pastorals. Penny Lernoux, in Cry of the People, has excellent journalistic accounts of grassroots Church participation in the Nicaraguan struggle.

29. Paul Oquist, Nicaragua: La Lucha Sandinista por La Democracia, Quito: Instituto Latinoamericano de Investigaciones Sociales, Serie de Materiales de Trabajo, No. 21, 1978. passim.

30. Op.cit., Dussel p. 405. Dussel offers a list of missing clergy and Catholic lay leaders.

31. Op.cit., Penny Lernoux, Chapter 3.

32. Jeffrey St. John, Nicaragua: An Ally Under Siege. In this most right wing of right wing analyses of the Nicaraguan Church, you can see by the investigator's attacks on the Capuchins that their condemnations were provoking some serious stonewalling in Washington. This entire book provides some pretty humorous reading because it assumes that the reading public still has a pre-Vietnam, pre-Watergate consciousness.

33. Op.cit., Dussel, p. 406.

34. Op.cit., Nicaragua: Ally Under Siege, pp. 82-83. See also the introduction by Miguel D'Escoto to Richard Millet's Guardians of the Dynasty, p. 13.

35. See Latin American Perspectives, "Nicaragua", Feb. 1978.

36. Op.cit., Dussel, p. 407. See also IEPALA, Op.cit., p. 93.

37. Ibid., IEPALA, p. 93.

38. Ibid., p. 86.

39. Excelsior, Sunday, October 23, 1977, "El ArzoBispo de Managua se Ofrece Como Mediador Entre la Izquierda y el Govierno". The title is misleading because the talks were an attempt to defuse the violence on both sides, not to mediate so much as to find a way to stop left wing violence. The bishops denied that the position of the FSLN was beyond the simple compromises offered by the bourgeoisie. They did not grasp that the FSLN position included a rejection of capitalism.

40. Ibid., Excelsior, Oct. 23, "El Arzobispo".

41. Conferencia Episcopal De Nicaragua, 1977, Managua, "Reprobamos Todo Tipo de Violencia", 8/1/77.

42. Op.cit., IEPALA, p. 88-89.

43. Op.cit., Nicaragua, Ally Under Siege, p. 79.

44. Amnesty International Report, The Republic of Nicaragua, August 1977. passim.

45. Oscar Rene Vargas, "La Crisis del Somocismo y el Movimento Obrero Nicaraguense", Estudios Centro Americanos, Vol. I, Feb. 1978, p. 205.

46. Ibid., p. 216.

47. See footnote number 9.

48. Op.cit., Paul Oquist, passim. See also National Catholic Reporter, "Nicaragua's Los Doce, I think they might try to kill one of us". August 18, 1978. See also Los Doce document of 1977 in Gaceta Sandinista, Comite Mexicano.

49. Orlando Nunez Soto, "The Third Force in the National Liberation of Nicaragua", Latin American Perspectives, Vol. VIII, No. 2, Spring 1981.

50. Latin American Bureau, Dictatorship and Revolution, pp. 11-13.

51. Presencia Sandinista, Revista de la Comision Exterior Del FSLN (1978), Ano 1, No. 3, Oct, Nov., Dec. 1978.

52. Latin American Bureau, op.cit., p. 24.

53. See footnote 48.

54. Barricada, Saturday 17 May 1980, "Sacerdotes en el Gobierno por Meritos revolutionarios", p. 16.

55. Penny Lernoux, "The Church Revolutionary in Latin America", The Nation, May 24, 1980, p. 623.

56. National Catholic Reporter, Dec. 7, 1979, "Revolutionary gives credit to Catholics". See also footnote 54.

57. An unreferenced xerox of an FSLN forum on religion found in files of Bill Smith, S.J., Director of Peace & Development for the Catholic Church, Montreal, Quebec. "Fall 1980". Available on request from my files, p. 20.

58. See Chapter II on Liberation Theology.

59. Op.cit., Bill Smith, pp. 21.

60. Ibid., p. 22.

61. Barricada, 7 October 1980, FSLN Position paper on Religion, "Los Cristianos en la Revolucion Popular Sandinista", p. 7.

62. Ibid., p. 4.

63. James Petras, "Whither the Nicaraguan Revolution", Monthly Review, Vol. 31, No. 5, Oct. 1979. passim.

64. For a discussion of the tactical alliances antithetical groups make during revolution see Frederick Engels, The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State, Progress Press, Moscow. 1977, pp. 143-154.

65. Christianity & Crisis, Vol. 40, No. 8, May 12, 1980. "Nicaragua the Revolution Takes Hold", p. 140.

66. For a discussion of class interest see E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class, Penguin Books, 1968, pp. 9-15. Thompson argues that it is difficult to find a "class". If you stop history dead at any one point, there are no great crevasses between classes, and no clear distinctions. As such, we can understand the class interests of bishops and clergy only if we watch these men over an adequate period of social change, in order to observe patterns in their relationships, their ideas, and their institutions. In the end, as Thompson says, class is defined by men as they live their own history. For our purposes, we should not be misled by the fact that both bishops and clergy unanimously share the theme of "the preferential

option for the poor" because remarkable differences exist between the praxis each group partakes of because of its religious beliefs and its rhetoric.

67. The Cardenal brothers came from a wealthy family in Granada.

68. Christianity & Crisis, Vol. 40, No. 8, May 12, 1980. "Nicaragua and the World"; an interview with Fr. Miguel D'Escoto by a group of twelve visiting American journalists, sponsored by Oxfam. p. 142.

69. Revista del Pensamiento, Vol. 159, Message of archbishop to the President's Council, August 3, 1978. See p. 109. They write for example, "we understand that those who use violence do so out of desperation and under the belief that beyond the bitterness of this process lies justice. We believe, however, that violence not only alienates the possibility of creating the reign of God on this earth, based on brotherhood and justice...and it is counterproductive for those who would use it." (author's translation) Their rejection of violence shows how they see the root of economic injustice in morality, and not in class conflict.

70. Uno Mas Uno, Nicaragua, 7 February, 1978. "Reanuda la Iglesia el movimiento contra Somoza."

71. The bishops were considered at best reformist by the more progressive priests involved in the revolution. However, it should be noted by those critics of the bishops that the ambiguous statements of the bishops were used successfully to isolate the Somoza regime. Political groups appeared to achieve greater results, in terms of impact on world opinion using the vague claims of the bishops. Indeed, whereas the more accurate claims of the lower clergy should have been more controversial, it was the claims of the bishops that carried more political punch. Thus we find it is not the accuracy of the statement but the position within the Church of the spokesman that is paramount in terms of political impact.

72. Uno Mas Uno, 9 February 1978. "Los Obispos orientan hacia el Communismo." Also see Catholic New Times, May 20, 1979, "Somoza asked to stop killings."

73. Ibid., Catholic New Times, May 20, 1979.

74. Catholic New Times, May 16, 1980. "Not All Priests to Quit Politics."

75. New York Times, December 10, 1980. "Nicaragua's Ties to Church Turn Sour."

76. Ibid., New York Times, December 10, 1980.

77. Inter-Church Committee on Human Rights in America. Newsletter, April 1981. "Canada and Latin America in the 1980s." This newsletter is composed of the transcripts from a conference held in Toronto in October 1980. The section on Nicaragua runs from pp. 24-29. Footnote comes from p. 26.

78. For a discussion of the Church as Pilgrim People of God, see Chapter II of thesis.

79. See Cardenal interview in Newsletter, op.cit., p. 26.

80. Christianity and Crisis, op.cit., "Nicaragua and the World", p. 144.

81. Ibid., p. 144.

EPILOGUE

Religion is not only a belief system but also a system of practices and actions in the world. Thus, modern religious people transform the world through their actions and are in turn themselves influenced by their experience of that world. My contention throughout this work was that religious practice cannot be precisely understood outside of a social historical context. In looking at the Nicaraguan case, it is apparent that the relationship between religion and politics was a vibrant one and that the religious convictions of the faithful brought them into the political realm.

As a result, the distinction between religion and politics has become blurred and less accessible to traditional methodological approaches. This applies for example, and above all, to the functional approach that ascribes absolute religious motives to some clergy and political motives to other clergy. According to the evidence of our thesis, however, the bishops were no more religious than the radical clergy. Likewise, we found that the calls by the bishops for moral restraint and their innvocations against violence were no less 'political' than the promotion of the poor and the FSLN by the lower clergy. The question became, then, not whether one group was more reli-

gious than the other but what Christian meanings did each give to their political activities.

Yet from within the situation of conflict in Nicaragua we discovered that bishops and clergy, although both proclaiming the option for the poor, did not always agree on the implications of faith for action. It became necessary to ask the question why this commitment and not another? Rather than reduce these contrary commitments to either class interests or theological predilections, we clarified how religious divisions related to political and economic life. By locating bishops and clergy in the midst of the social cleavages that swirled around them, we intermingled the sociological, political, religious, and economic aspects of our problem, in order to clarify the relationship between the life, the faith and the actions of both bishops and clergy.

Yet we prefer also to think about this problem of the political implications of faith in a way that does not bind one down to a purely political theory. For example, just as the functionalists place these priests on a continuum of holiness, political scientists cram them into ideal types like conservatives, centrists, and leftists, without any consideration of the beliefs and goals of religious actors. This one dimensional approach relegates faith, and the concepts of the faithful to the backwaters of analysis. Assuming religion to be static, ahistorical,

and other-worldly, some analysts assert that radical priests become so despite being religious, whereas conservative priests are immune to politics because of their religiousity. I think that one cannot but reject this picture of religious activity given the data brought forth in this thesis. The fact is that it is clearly vain to seek the basis of these priests' social activities in either the purely political or the purely theological realm. Out of the chaotic conditions of his time the priest attempts to make both theological and practical order.

The church in Latin America has recently become the victim of abuse and oppression at the hands of national security governments. This has led to many priests contemplating the political implications of their faith. Indeed, as we have seen in the Nicaraguan case, a history of oppression and social unrest played an important role in the genesis of radical theology. The existential experience of practising liberation theology brought the Nicaraguan believer into a more dynamic relationship with the everyday world and his experience and understanding of reality grew and changed continuously. Religious values, then, underwent a burst of creativity because of this interaction with oppression and abuse, and were no longer perceived as eternal and fixed. According to the thesis, the new religious dimension of promoting liberation and justice for the poor led to the creation of an even more active

faith. For example, some priests became involved in the FSLN, whereas others promoted literacy programs or helped the peasants to organize social action groups. In all cases, these political actions were performed with a deep sense of religious conviction.

On the other hand, the 'subversiveness' of defending the poor or teaching them to read is historically specific. There is nothing inherently political in these acts. In Nicaragua, as oppression and violence by public authorities increased in order to sustain their hegemony, more and more acts were rendered political.

The terms politics and religion bring to mind compactness and homogeneity when in fact they are quite heterogeneous and intermingled. In the Nicaraguan case an historical approach provided an understanding of not only the church's defence of Somoza, but also of the church's shift away from his repressive regime. More importantly, this method helped us explain why the bishops sought a political solution to the crisis whereas the lower clergy turned to violence and the FSLN. Finally, I don't claim that an historical approach solves all problems, but it allows us to bring together levels which remain, even currently, quite separate.

Today as a result of her stance, the church suffers ever increasing persecution at the hands of national security governments and right wing paramilitary groups.

The reason for such persecution is succinctly explained by one commentator:

> The military will never forgive the church for teaching the campesinos that they have the right to live, the right to think and the right to organize.

It is only by painstakingly locating this comment within a concrete historical context that we can meaningfully engage the problem of the relationship of religion and politics.

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