

**Comunidades Eclesiais de Base in the
Archdiocese of São Paulo**

**The Structure and Orientation of Comunidades Eclesiais de
Base (CEBs) in the Archdiocese of São Paulo**

by

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ABSTRACT

The Structure and Orientation of Comunidades Eclesiais de Base (CEBs) in the Archdiocese of São Paulo

In recent years, the Roman Catholic Church in Brazil has attracted a good deal of attention within social scientific and religious circles. Traditionally seen as being synonymous with wealth and privilege, it is now viewed as one of the most politically progressive Churches in Latin America, owing to the position it has adopted in favour of the poor and oppressed. Of particular interest to students of the Church are the comunidades eclesiais de base (basic ecclesial communities) commonly known as CEBs. These predominantly lower-class, often politically oriented lay groups are coming to be seen as the most visible expression of the Brazilian Church's new-found commitment to the masses. To many, the CEBs are a renovating force which will have an irreversible impact on both Roman Catholicism and Brazilian society generally.

Within the literature, there currently exist two contrasting interpretations of the CEB phenomenon. The first approach, which is rooted in an action-oriented religious current known as Liberation Theology, borrows heavily on

Marxian terminology and interprets the groups as a spontaneous expression of the emergent class consciousness of the poor. The second approach, drawing upon the work of Weber and other organizational theorists, stresses the fundamental diversity of the CEBs, and the role which the Church as an institution plays in shaping their basic characteristics and aims.

To date, few empirical studies of the Brazilian CEBs have emerged which point conclusively to the validity of one or the other of these approaches. The present study helps remedy this deficiency. Specifically, we seek to test the two theories currently in vogue through an in-depth investigation of a select sample of groups situated in the Archdiocese of São Paulo.

Briefly stated, the principal finding of the dissertation is that the CEBs are best understood within the context of the institutional as opposed to the Liberationist perspective. In essence, the data demonstrate that the groups are an extremely heterogeneous collectivity, and that their organizational structure and orientation are dependent not upon social location, but the quality of their ties to the Church hierarchy.

For my wife Sara, my mother Bess, and in memory of Derek, a special friend with whom I shared a great love for Brazil and her people.

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INTRODUCTION

In terms of sheer magnitude, the Roman Catholic Church in Brazil is an extremely impressive organization. With some 242 ecclesiastical divisions, over 6,000 parishes, 355 bishops, 12,500 priests, and nearly 40,000 men and women religious, it is the second largest national Church in the world. Only the Italian Church is larger. Relative to the size of its following, and the territory it must cover, the Brazilian Church operates however, at less than optimum strength. Brazil after all, is the world's largest and most populous Catholic country. Of the 130 million inhabitants who live within the nation's 8.5 million square kilometre land area, fully 90 percent list their principal faith as Roman Catholic (CNBB, 1984: 95; IBGE, 1982: 120, 196).

In recent years, the Church in Brazil has attracted a good deal of attention within social scientific and religious circles alike. Traditionally seen as being synonymous with wealth and privilege, it is now viewed as one of the most politically progressive Churches in Latin America, owing to the position it has adopted in favour of the poor and oppressed. Of particular interest to students of the Church are the comunidades eclesiais de base (basic Christian communities or CEBs). These predominantly lower-class,

ostensibly politically-oriented lay groups are coming to be seen as the most visible expression of the Brazilian Church's newfound commitment to the masses. To many, the CEBs are a renovating force which will have an irreversible impact on both Roman Catholicism and Brazilian society generally.

The question of what exactly a CEB is and does, is difficult to answer, as a number of possibilities have been offered by a multitude of group analysts. The most frequently cited definition comes from Betto (1981: 17) and is based upon an explication of the constituent parts of the term CEB itself. Thus:

The groups are communities because they bring together people of the same faith, who belong to the same Church, and who live in the same area. They are ecclesial because they are congregated within the Church as grassroots nuclei of the community of faith. They are basic because they consist of people who work with their hands (popular classes).

Another commonly used description is provided by Baraglia (1974) who characterizes the CEBs as small, freely forming associations of ordinary Catholics, who meet on a regular basis in an informal setting to deepen their knowledge of the Gospel, to reflect upon community needs and seek adequate solutions to those needs, to celebrate together in the Eucharist collective victories and downfalls, and to spread the word of God.

The central theme which these, and indeed most other CEB definitions (to be examined in Chapter I) seek to emphasize is that the groups are essentially ecclesial associations which informally practice their Catholic faith in their own way while maintaining an eye to the amelioration of local living conditions. The methodology which the CEBs employ in pursuing these aims has been termed 'see-judge-act'. Through group discussion, we are told, CEB participants first recognize the extent of a problem which affects them (eg. lack of sewers or running water in the neighbourhood, land ownership, etc.), reflect upon it in light of the Gospel, and then act collectively to correct it.

Estimates of the number of CEBs currently existing in Brazil vary according to the author cited. The consensus seems to be however, that there are somewhere in the area of 60 to 80 thousand groups with a total membership in the range of 2 to 3 million. Territorially speaking, the CEBs can be found in all parts of Brazil, with heavier concentrations in the central-west, northeast, and southeast regions. Some disagreement does exist as to their precise social location though. Based on a small sample of 101 groups, a 1977 study commissioned by the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops concluded that 53.5 percent of CEBs are found among the peasantry in rural areas, 16.8 percent in urban centres where the middle-classes predominate, and 10.9 percent on the

(18.8 percent did not report their location) (CNBB, 1977: 20-1). By contrast, Gregory's (1973) 1971 survey of 43 CEBs stated that the majority (56 percent) were located on the perimeter of metropolitan areas, with only 30 percent in rural zones, and 9 percent in urban middle-class districts (5 percent in this case did not state their locale). The two studies agree however in one crucial respect, i.e. that the majority of CEBs in Brazil exist among the poor, either in rural or suburban areas, with but few in more well-to-do urban neighbourhoods.

The implications of millions of ordinary Catholics seeking to express their faith in a new way and working together to solve real social problems are of course tremendous. Within the Church first of all, enhanced lay participation can lead to greater decentralization of ecclesial authority and the adoption of new and innovative directions within the institution as a whole. Within the secular world, the CEBs potentially serve as a vehicle for awakening the lower-classes to their needs and the means of attaining them. While it may start on a small scale, the political activation of the poor could conceivably spread beyond the immediate locale, and into all areas of civil society, such as labour unions, consumer associations, government, and so forth.

Where do these groups of such obvious significance find their origins? By most accounts, the CEBs first emerged just over 20 years ago within the context of key religious and sociopolitical events. To begin with, lay group activation within the Church among the masses, initially stimulated during the 1950's by Catholic Action, was greatly legitimated and enhanced after 1964 by the Second Vatican Council.¹ In essence Vatican II called for the Church to move closer to the faithful, and for the faithful in turn to become more intensely involved in the promotion of social justice. Further impetus for CEB formation was provided by the 1968 meeting of Latin American bishops held at Medellin, Colombia. During this encounter, the episcopate soundly criticized existing Church structure as being out of touch with the reality of Latin America, and called for the hierarchy to focus its attention firmly on the plight of the disadvantaged classes in the region. As the best means for effecting both the revitalization of the Church as an institution, and liberating the poor from economic and political oppression, the bishops cited the CEBs in particular. This call was heeded with special enthusiasm in Brazil as a solution to the Church's relative institutional weakness (given the size of the country), and the deplorable conditions under which the vast majority of the population was forced to live.

Secular factors contributing to CEB development are related to increasing economic and political repression in Brazil felt in the wake of a military coup in 1964.² In that year, the generals stepped in to protect the country from what they saw as rampant communist infiltration of government ranks, and to shore up a badly foundering economy. In order to set the nation back on the track to tranquility and prosperity, the military developed a 3 point strategy based on the following: 1) the implementation of a capitalist model of development led by strong foreign investment; 2) the imposition of strict controls on democratic institutions and the creation of a comprehensive national security apparatus designed to re-establish social peace and an attractive climate for investment; and 3) the promotion of rapid capital accumulation among the more affluent sectors of Brazilian society while calling for sacrifices on the part of workers; the economic pie, it was stated, had first to be fattened up, but would in time be divided more equitably.

The Brazilian economy responded almost immediately to the measures adopted by the military after 1964. By 1967, inflation had fallen and investor confidence had grown dramatically. In the years following moreover, the economy grew at an unprecedented annual rate in excess of 10 percent, prompting many to speak of a Brazilian economic 'miracle' in the making. But while the middle and upper-classes

benefitted greatly from this upswing, the deferred rewards promised to the lower-classes never in fact materialized. If anything, the poor actually became poorer during the boom years of the late 1960's and early 70's. Between 1960 and 1977 for example, the top 1 percent of the economically active population increased its share of the national income from 11.9 to 18.3 percent. The poorest half by comparison, saw their share drop from 17.4 to a mere 13.1 percent. To make matters worse, the situation of the average worker deteriorated still further after 1974. It was in this year that the Brazilian 'miracle' began to go flat, as the economy faltered under the weight of soaring import bills (especially for crude oil), and a shrinking export market brought about by recession in the industrialized world. This in turn spelled higher inflation and growing unemployment in all economic sectors.

The economic hardship borne primarily by the disadvantaged classes provided a backdrop for growing social unrest in Brazil in the years following the military coup. Unfortunately however, the government had eliminated or emasculated most pre-coup political parties and popular organizations, and thus the poor were left with few avenues of legitimate protest. The Church, to a considerable extent, stepped in to fill this void. Itself increasingly under attack due to open criticisms of the government levelled by

its more politically progressive elements, the Church in time came to adopt a unified contestory stance with respect to the military regime and its repressive policies. In addition to creating a number of strategies and organizations in defence of human rights, to the poor and oppressed directly the Church offered the CEBs, as protected spaces from which the people could express their disenchantment with the political and economic status quo. Even after the current period of political liberalization (abertura) began in 1978, the CEBs continued to fulfill a useful purpose insofar as social problems have essentially remained unsolved by elected officials, and few popular organizations with mass appeal have as yet arisen.

Since the advent of the first CEBs in the 1960's, a vast literature has sprung up which attempts to more fully explain the origins, characteristics, and essential thrust of the groups. The bulk of this material is however, purely descriptive, relying heavily on personal and even second-hand observations. More often than not, the authors of such studies are Catholic clergymen and theologians (see for example, Barreiro, 1982; Betto, 1981; 1983; C. Boff, 1980; L. Boff, 1981; 1983) who are also the principal exponents of a school of thought commonly referred to as the Theology of Liberation. Using distinctly Marxian terms of analysis, the Liberationists seek both to explain and promote a more active

role for the Church in the struggle of the lower-classes to liberate themselves from political, economic and religious oppression. Although an essentially ecclesial phenomenon, the CEBs, in their view, ultimately arise as the people collectively become aware of and react to the injustice of their situation, in a manner similar to that of Marx's industrial proletariat. Uniformly oriented towards the auto-liberation of their class, the groups are in fact the principal carriers of a new social order, in which equality and fraternity prevail.

In addition to the view espoused by Liberation Theology, a much smaller, but methodologically more rigid school has emerged which conceptualizes the CEBs in somewhat different terms (see for example Bruneau, 1982; Demo in CNBB, 1977; and Gregory, 1973). Admittedly, inadequate sample selection and or data collection techniques have restricted the interpretation of the CEBs offered in many studies of this genre. In still others moreover, the CEBs appear to be of only secondary interest to the author and are dealt with accordingly. Nevertheless, such studies have uniformly reached some important conclusions with respect to the groups. In contrast to the Liberationist approach, the CEBs are generally viewed as an extremely heterogeneous collectivity, whether in terms of group organization, political orientation, or the class origins of the

membership. Their emergence and development moreover, are seen as attributable not to a special form of class consciousness, but to explicit strategies conceived, developed and implemented by the Church hierarchy.

The debate between those adopting the class-oriented versus the Church-instigated view of the CEBs largely continues unabated within the literature, due to the lack of hard data on the groups' organizational structure and orientation. In this dissertation, we propose to help fill this void, and thus offer a test of the two approaches currently in vogue, by providing what may perhaps be the most comprehensive and in-depth investigation of the CEBs and their members conducted to date. The data to be used in our study were gathered from a select sample of CEBs employing both a quantitative and qualitative methodology. So as to maximize the quantity of data on as broad a range of groups as possible (given available resources), this sample was chosen from the largest and most diverse Catholic archdiocese in Brazil, that of São Paulo which is located in the southeastern region of the country. From within the archdiocese, CEBs were selected from a variety of social and geographical settings in accordance with a stratified-random sampling plan.

To foreshadow briefly, the findings to be presented in the pages which follow largely confirm what most

quantitative studies of the CEBs have already strongly suggested, i.e. that contrary to the assertions made by the Liberationists, the groups are extremely diverse in form and aim, and depend a good deal on the direction and institutional support provided by the local Church. Of particular importance, as we shall see, are the priests and nuns commonly referred to as 'pastoral agents', who often initiate the CEBs and accompany them as they evolve.

In our first chapter, we shall open with a detailed history of the Brazilian Catholic Church and the CEBs, as it has been defined and analyzed by the two major theoretical interpretations under investigation. These perspectives will then be examined in light of sociological theory in general. Next, we shall present a detailed statement of the research problem, followed by a description of the procedural methodology to be employed in testing the approaches to the CEBs in question. Finally, in the last section, we shall provide a general guide to the content of our remaining chapters.

NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

¹This discussion is based upon analyses provided by Bruneau (1982; 1984), D. Fernandes (1982), L. Fernandes (1984), and Ireland (1983).

²Here we have relied upon the work of Ames (1973), Bruneau (1982), Roett (1972), Skidmore (1973) and especially L. Fernandes (1984).

CHAPTER ONE: CURRENT INTERPRETATIONS OF THE CEB PHENOMENON

The Rise of the 'New' Brazilian Church

In 1968 at Medellin, Colombia, Latin American bishops met to seek ways of implementing the innovative directives of the Roman Catholic Church's Second Vatican Council. What emerged from this conference was a landmark document, condemning internal and external colonialism in Latin America, preaching solidarity with the poor and oppressed, and expressing hope for the future of the lower-classes in terms of 'liberation'. These ideals were later reconfirmed at the subsequent bishops meeting at Puebla, Mexico in 1979 (McCann, 1981: 132 - 8).

Of all the Latin American Churches represented at these conferences, it is perhaps the Brazilian Catholic Church which has identified most closely with the priorities established by the Latin American bishops. Indeed, there would appear to be a 'new' Church on the rise in Brazil, which according to leading theologians such as Leonardo Boff (1981: 87), is firmly on the side of the poor, having shed the cloak of traditionalism which for centuries has enshrouded it.

One hardly need be a theologian or social scientist to have noticed the dramatic changes which have occurred within the Brazilian Church in recent years. In spite of yet to be resolved internal contradictions and conflicts, the Church as an institution has given clear signals that it has firmly 'opted for the poor', to use its own terminology. This new vision has manifested itself unmistakably in both word, through the various pronouncements of the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops (CNBB), and deed, through the establishment and support of human rights organizations and popular movements.

To the lay observer, it may seem strange to speak of the Brazilian Church as 'opting for the poor'. Historically, it would seem that the Roman Catholic Church, whether within or outside Brazil, has always been the Church of the poor, fulfilling their religious needs, and dispensing charity when necessary. In the Brazilian case however, we are speaking not of the Church caring for the poor in a material or spiritual sense as it traditionally has done, but of adopting the cause of the poor, and of attacking the economic and political system which ostensibly perpetuates their poverty. The following quote from a recent Church document perhaps best describes this new ideological position:

An authentic evangelical commitment, such as that of Christ, is above all a commitment to those most in need; the Church in Brazil stresses the position taken at Puebla by the Latin American bishops to exercise its full evangelizing mission in light of a

clear and prophetic preferential option for the poor, for the purpose of their total liberation.

The preferential option for the poor is a clear commitment, unequivocal and evangelically inviolable, with the concrete cause of the impoverished in Brazilian society (CNBB, 1983: 35).

The historical antecedents to the remarkable transformation which the Brazilian Church has undergone in recent years are many and varied. Students of the Church generally divide its history into four or more basic stages running along a number of conceptual axes. Since however, we are concerned primarily with ideological and organizational change, for our purposes, it will be possible to trace the historical course of the Church during three broad epochs: 1500 to 1889, 1889 to 1945, and 1945 to the present.

1500 to 1889: The Colonial and Imperial Eras

The Roman Catholic Church arrived in Brazil with the first explorers dispatched by the Portuguese Crown in the early 16th century. In the New World, as in the old, Church and State worked side by side, in pursuit of their principal aims of souls and riches respectively (Bruneau, 1974: 12). Both institutions were in fact thoroughly integrated, and cooperatively endeavoured to create in Brazil a cultural mirror image of the mother country (Hoornaert, 1978: 482).

Of the two institutions however, the Church was decidedly the weaker sister. Up until 1889 for example, the essential structure of the Church was extremely fragile.

There were only a handful of dioceses, and even fewer bishops to administer them. Parishes were few and far between, and communications networks all but non-existent. What few priests there were in Brazil during the Colonial and Imperial eras tended to be underpaid and poorly distributed among the population. Many in fact had affixed themselves to the wealthy landowning class, ministering to the needs of the latifundiários and their families in return for room and board (Bruneau, 1974: 16 - 17). In its day to day operations, the early Church moreover, was extremely dependent upon the State. As Bruneau (1974: 12 - 13) and Lima (1979: 13 - 14) have pointed out, concessions granted the Portuguese Crown by the Pope following the expulsion of the Moors from Iberia left the Church in the Portuguese world a virtual department of the central government. In Brazil, the state bureaucracy maintained close control over all aspects of Church administration including financing, the creation of ecclesiastical units, and promotion and discipline within clerical ranks. In addition, all communication between the colonial hierarchy and the Vatican had first to pass through official government channels.

The Church's heavy dependence upon the State did allow for certain advantages which it would not otherwise have enjoyed. As a part of the State bureaucracy, the Church was for example able to influence government policy in religious matters, and to maintain its dominion over the

Crown's loyal subjects. As Hoornaert (1974: 13) has noted, Catholicism during the early period of Brazilian history was obligatory. Adherence to the faith, or at the very least, respect for its status as the official State religion, was demanded by law.

Because of the Church's special relationship with the State, and its weak institutional presence among the population, one can hardly speak of a 'people's' Church in Brazil prior to 1889. Rather this was a Church which relied exclusively upon the governing authority to assure the continued allegiance of the laity; whose very existence was dependent upon the goodwill of the Crown and its propertied allies.

1889 to 1945: The Emergence of an Autonomous Brazilian Church

After 67 years of independence under monarchical rule, Brazil rather peacefully adopted the republican form of government in 1889. For the Church, this spelled the end of its intimate relationship with the State. No longer the official religion, the Brazilian Catholic Church found itself essentially adrift (Bruneau, 1974: 30; Lima, 1979: 15).

In response, claims Lima (1979: 16), the Church worked immediately to forge new and more direct ties with the Vatican, and together with Rome set for itself two main objectives. The first of these was to build a modern

institutional structure more appropriate to the reality of the Brazilian situation. The second was to re-establish Catholicism as the nation's official faith.

With the Vatican's help, and through the efforts of prominent Brazilian churchmen such as Cardinal Sebastião Leme, the first of these aims was eventually met. By 1920, the ecclesiastical structure of the Brazilian Church had in fact been greatly improved, and a number of Catholic lay organizations which had appeared in Europe also began to take root in Brazil (Bruneau, 1974: 32). The second Church objective was not fully realized however until 1930, when through armed intervention, a former governor from Rio Grande do Sul state took control of the presidency. This event was to open a new era of Church-State cooperation in Brazil.

The new president, Getulio Vargas, was as essentially authoritarian figure, but a modernizer, and has been widely credited with bringing Brazil into the industrial era during the 1930's (Carone, 1976: 57, 69, 133). He was moreover, an extremely masterful politician, who through a delicate balance of skillful maneuvering and at times outright repression, was able to maintain his grip on the nation's highest office until 1945. During his time as president, he was able to draw upon the support of the most diverse sectors of Brazilian society, including large blocks of the rural landowning class, the military, the newly emergent middle and

working-classes, and finally, the Church (Dulles, 1967: 78, 120; Skidmore, 1967: 14, 36-9).

The Church in fact, primarily in the person of Cardinal Leme, had been instrumental in effecting a relatively peaceful transition of power when Vargas first took office in 1930 (Dulles, 1967: 73). In offering Vargas his blessing, Leme had lent the new regime a certain degree of legitimacy which it might not have otherwise possessed. Vargas, for his part, readily recognized the Church as an important ally, and moved quickly so as not to lose its continued support. As Bruneau (1974: 40-1) and Della Cava (1975: 15) have noted, Vargas in effect invited the Church to re-enter the State realm, allowing it to exercise broad control over the formation of laws concerning marriage, divorce, education, and so forth.

This new relationship between Church and State in Brazil, it should be stressed, was hardly identical to the one in vigour during the earlier Colonial and Imperial eras. This was due primarily to the Church's newly acquired institutional strength which militated against the possibility of State domination. In terms of its basic orientation and approach, the Church however had changed very little since 1889. It still remained an essentially elite-directed body, which was heavily reliant upon the central government and other powerful sectors of Brazilian society to

maintain its spiritual hegemony over the laity (Lima, 1979: 18).

1945 to the Present: The Birth of the 'New' Brazilian Church

Because of the Church's historical ties to the State and other powerful forces in Brazil, it has customarily been described as the Church of the rich (Barreiro, 1982: 4). During the late 1940's and early 1950's however, concurrent with Vargas' fall from power¹ and the re-emergence of liberal democracy in Brazil, the Church began down an entirely different path; the path of equality and of justice for the poor. One of the first developments signalling the Church's new direction was the publication, in 1950, of Dom Inocêncio Engelke's "Conosco, sem nós ou contra nós, se fará a Reforma Rural," (With us, without us, or against us, Rural Reform will be made). The bishop's statement was in fact a landmark document, calling for extensive agrarian reform in Brazil (CAPDH, 1981: 94). The early 1950's also witnessed the emergence of Catholic Action² in Brazil, and the growth of specialized lay groups such as the Juventude Operária Católica (Working-class Catholic Youth), the Juventude Universitária Católica (University Catholic Youth), the Juventude Agrária Católica (Agrarian Catholic Youth), and the Juventude Estudantil Católica (Student Catholic Youth). These and other similar groups sought to promote change in Brazil on a broad basis, by sponsoring an awareness of social

problems within their respective milieux (Bruneau, 1974: 95; Dale, 1980: 1127).

Another important occurrence during this same period was the formation of the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops (CNBB) in 1952 (Dale, 1980: 1127). Founded by a core of social progressives within the episcopate, this organization was instrumental in promoting social change along a number of fronts. First of all, it provided breathing room within the institutional Church for the various specialized Catholic Action groups to grow. Secondly, stimulated by Bishop Eugenio Sales' experiment with radio schools in Natal in 1958,³ the CNBB established a rural education network, aimed at promoting both literacy and social awareness among the Northeastern peasantry. After 1961, the programme, which was termed the Basic Education Movement (MEB) was expanded to other parts of Brazil with the aid of government funding. Thirdly, by 1959 the CNBB had become involved in rural unionization, helping peasants to organize in a number of predominantly agrarian states (Bruneau, 1974: 80-5; Dale, 1980: 1127). Finally, statements released by the CNBB or its Regional divisions helped to promote awareness of, and offer solutions to the problems affecting the Brazilian lower classes. In 1956 for example, Northeastern bishops denounced rural poverty in a document entitled "Declaração da Campina Grande." Furthermore, in

1962, the CNBB as a whole published its first joint plan, the "Plano de Emergência," through which it sought to define priorities for pastoral action for the coming years (CAPDH, 1981: 96-8).

The momentum which the new progressive elements within the Church had established by the early 1960's however, came to an abrupt halt with the Revolution of 1964. In a bold move designed to protect the nation against what it saw as rampant corruption, communist infiltration, and imminent economic collapse, the Brazilian military wrested control of the government from then-president João Goulart.

Up until it eventually began to relax its grip on the nation in the late 1970's, the military regime which installed itself in 1964 has been guided by an overwhelming concern with 'national security'. Specifically, it has sought to strengthen the presence of the armed forces throughout Brazilian territory, to modernize the country's political structure, and to foster rapid economic growth through technical planning. In order to achieve these goals, the military established what might be best described as a 'bureaucratic-authoritarian' state, in which political, economic, and military planning were highly centralized. While certain democratic institutions were formally maintained, opportunities for popular participation were severely curtailed through the passing of a series of constitutional amendments known as Institutional Acts.

Opposition to the regime moreover, was severely repressed through media censorship and the imprisonment or exile of political dissidents (Bruneau, 1974: 119; Roett, 1972: 106-110; 'Sô fantasias', 1984: 4).⁴

Around the time of the coup, the Brazilian Church as an institution had raised few objections. Immediately prior to the military takeover in fact, some of the clergy and more active laity had organized mass protest rallies in Brazil's major cities to fight the communist threat represented by the Goulart regime. These opposition rallies were referred to as "Marchas da Família com Deus pela Liberdade," (Marches of the Family with God for Liberty). Goulart's supposed radicalism was also publically condemned by sectors of the episcopate (CAPDH, 1981: 100). Those in authority in the Church, claims Bishop Jose Pires, were actually relieved when the military finally took control of the government. "All of the hierarchy," he recently stated, "with but one or two timid exceptions...felt a great relief with the triumph of the Revolution," ('Relações', 1984: 10).

The immediate implications of the military takeover for the Church, and especially its more radical element, were however nothing short of disastrous. The work of the various Catholic Action groups among the less favoured sectors of Brazilian society for example, was labelled 'subversive' and quickly brought to a halt. As Roett (1972: 118) explains:

With the coup of 1964, the military quickly shattered AP, JUC, UNE, MEB, and other radical Catholic and popular organizations; their leaders were imprisoned and exiled; their programs condemned as subversive and 'anti-Brazilian'.

The coup and subsequent repression of the Church following in its wake moreover, did much to weaken the position of the social progressives within the CNBB. As a consequence, the organization moved further to the political centre, and generally avoided direct confrontations with the ruling military. In 1966, it did produce a "Joint Pastoral Plan," which was ostensibly designed to carry on the work mandated by the bishops' 1962 "Plano de Emergência." This was however a rather weakly conceived document, offering no concrete options for implementing the amorphous reforms it advocated (Bruneau, 1974: 140). As well in 1967, the Central Commission of the CNBB released a statement entitled "Why the Bishops Cannot Remain Silent." But although the document criticized government policy, it was not endorsed by the organization as a whole; nor was it well received within the ranks of the clergy. It served more than anything therefore, to publicly demonstrate a growing lack of tolerance within the Church for those on the political left (Roett, 1972: 119).

With the progressive vanguard of the Church effectively in disarray, only a few isolated bishops and priests were left to resist the regime openly (Antoine, 1973: 15). This situation was to endure until at least 1970.

After this date, the Brazilian Church as a whole began to regroup, eventually adopting a unified contestatory stance with respect to the repressive policies of the military regime.

Two factors figured prominently in the reactivation of the Church along socially progressive lines. On the one hand, certain religious ideas emanating from the Second Vatican Council, papal encyclicals such as "Populorum Progressio," and the Latin American bishops meeting at Medellin in 1968, had served to redefine the social mission of the Church in terms of justice, equality and the development of the human person. Salvation was still seen as key, but was increasingly perceived in social, as opposed to individual terms (Ireland, 1983: 8). Religious ideas calling for a more just and egalitarian world were particularly well received in Brazil, owing perhaps to the realities of that country's extremely uneven social structure (Sanders, 1980: 8). Thus, they provided not only the justification, but a strong impetus for the hierarchy to once again move closer to the cause of the poor and oppressed, just as it had begun to do prior to 1964.

On the other hand, the increased repression of the Church in the late 1960's and early 1970's orchestrated by the military, induced the Church to institutionally close ranks in opposition to the government. The repression, states Betto (1983: 495), insofar as it "fell without

distinction upon the ecclesiastical institution, [strengthened] within it an 'esprit de corps', and [awakened] it critical sense." The arbitrary arrest and torture of religious personnel in particular became the focal point of conflict between the military government and an ever increasing number of bishops. Such conflict in turn, not only challenged the clergy to come forward 'en masse' in aid of their Church, but also helped the institution to clarify and underline the differences between its own newfound goals of social justice and equality, and the 'national security' objectives of the State (Bruneau, 1974: 217; 1984: 22-3).

The repression moreover, forced the hierarchy to collectively mobilize in defence of the lower-classes, who by far and away were the one group most adversely affected by human rights abuses. With political parties⁵ and most popular organizations outlawed, the poor turned increasingly to the Church to act on their behalf. In response, the institution came to adopt the role of unofficial opposition in Brazil, becoming in effect, the 'voice of the voiceless' (Bruneau, 1984: 23). This consequently, had no other effect than to enhance solidarity within the institution generally, and to strengthen its ties to the disadvantaged in Brazilian society.

Evidence of the regeneration of the Brazilian Catholic Church as a force defending the interests of the poor and oppressed in Brazil, is clearly present in the

various documents published by the CNBB and its Regional divisions after 1970. In 1973 for example, Northeastern bishops released a statement entitled "Eu ouvi os clamores do meu povo," (I have heard the cry of my people), which clearly expressed solidarity with the plight of the lower classes in their region. A similar document, "Marginalização de um povo," (Marginalization of a people) was also published that same year by bishops from the Central-west. At the national level, a number of important statements appeared after 1975. Principal among these were "Comunicação Pastoral ao Povo de Deus," (1976) (Pastoral Message to the People of God), "Exigências Cristãs de uma Ordem Política," (1977) (Christian Requirements for a Political Order), and "Subsídios para uma Política Social," (1979) (Aids for a Social Policy) (CAPDH, 1981: 114-16; Dale, 1980: 1126). Even after a period of political liberalization (abertura) began in Brazil around 1980, the CNBB continued to promote the cause of the poor through such documents as "Reflexão Cristã sobre a Conjuntura Política," (1981) (Christian Reflection on the Political Situation), and "Solo Urbano e Ação Pastoral," (1982) (Urban Land and Pastoral Action) (Bruneau, 1984: 9-10).

Through the CNBB, the Church has worked moreover, to establish a number of national programmes in defence of human rights. In 1973 for example, the Conselho Indigenista Missionário (Native Missionary Council) was formed to help

the Indians protect themselves from arbitrary abuses. Some two years later, the CNBB created the Comissão Pastoral de Terra (Pastoral Land Commission) which has since worked to defend the rights of small landholders in Brazil. In addition to these programmes, the CNBB has promoted the formation of human rights defence groups at all ecclesiastical levels within the Church, and has stalwartly supported the development of popular organizations such as the comunidades eclesiais de base (base Christian communities) (CAPDH, 1981: 110-12).

The CNBB, which is clearly the motor force behind such initiatives, is not of course necessarily synonymous with the Church as an institution. In fact, there are many within the ranks of the hierarchy who are opposed to the progressive stance which it has adopted, and who refuse to implement its policy recommendations (Baraglia, 1983; Bruneau, 1982: Chapter 6). Nevertheless, open criticism of the CNBB is extremely rare, and there would appear at least to be a good deal of consensus within the Church on most issues (Bruneau, 1984: 4). Few observers moreover, would disagree that given the everyday attitudes and actions of its membership, the Church as a whole has fallen into line behind the CNBB, and thus as an institution has declared its 'preferential option for the poor'.

Contrasting Interpretations of the 'New' Church in Brazil

So far, we have traced the historical course of the Church in Brazil, outlining the ways in which it has transformed itself into an autonomous institution geared to the needs and aspirations of the lower classes. At this point however, we wish to deal with what are commonly seen as the root causes of the Brazilian Church's about turn in the social justice direction after 1950.

Generally speaking, there are two main contrasting schools of thought which attempt to explain the emergence and development of the 'new' Church both within Brazil specifically and Latin America generally. The first of these, which we shall call the grassroots approach, sees the Church as responding to pressure for change from its main constituency, the poor. The second, or institutional approach, interprets change within the Church as part of a carefully planned strategy, formulated by the hierarchy in the interests of institutional survival.

The grassroots approach is closely tied to the Theology of Liberation, which since the 1960's has gained considerable popularity within Church circles in Latin America. Briefly stated, Liberation Theology attempts to critically reflect upon the reality of Latin American social structure, and to interpret the present and future role of the Church in altering the status quo in the region. In

examining social structure and assessing the potential for change moreover, Liberationists rely heavily upon Marxian tools of analysis. Consequently, they place a great deal of emphasis upon the prophetic role of the dominated classes. These are seen as largely responsible for bringing forth great changes in the structure of Latin American society, as they struggle to liberate themselves from political and economic oppression.⁶

According to grassroots theorists, it is precisely, in fact, this temporal mission of the poor which has so profoundly altered the orientation of the Church during the past three decades. Dussel (1981: 100) for example, speaks of the Church's new social mission as emanating from a "people-rooted Christianity which has been gestating in Latin America over the past twenty-five years." This 'people-rooted Christianity', following Gutierrez (1981: 108-9) began with the social irruption or 'breaking-in' of the oppressed classes in the region which have increasingly made their presence felt through their concrete struggles for liberation. In time, claims Gutierrez, this "shift from absence to presence" within the social sphere, has also come to take place within the Church. "There too," he adds, "the poor are increasingly getting across their right to live their faith."

Similarly, Maduro (1982) sees the change occurring within the Church as the result of class conflict coinciding

with the rise of the 'national security state' in Latin America. In response to the subsequent suppression of their economic and political aspirations, the poor, claims Maduro, have steadily turned to the Church as the one available space where they could freely direct their opposition to the State. In doing so, they have in effect moved to take over the Latin American Church, untying the chains which have traditionally bound it to the dominant classes. This move was possible, claims L. Boff (1981: 128) since the Church is a relatively autonomous institution, and consequently not condemned to a conservative function, as orthodox Marxism claims. Thus, states L. Boff, the poor could "appeal to the Church in their strategy to win more power and autonomy in the face of the domination from which they are suffering."

The idea that the Church was effectively taken over by the people in their quest for liberation has also been espoused by Souza (1978), Palacio (1979) and Lima (1979), all of whom stress the importance of class struggle in the transformation of the Church. Lima (1979: 30-40) however, has developed an interesting variant to the standard argument. He asserts that in the case of Brazil, the middle-class came to exert a considerable degree of influence within the Church during the 1930's. With time, states Lima, progressive elements within this class began to lead the Church in the social justice direction, beginning primarily

with the various Catholic Action groups which came to flower after 1950. It was not the lower-class directly then which initiated change within the Church, but a specific sector of the bourgeoisie, which acted in the interests of the masses.

To summarize, the grassroots theorists argue that the Church's 'option for the poor' was eventually adopted by the hierarchy as the direct result of a class struggle which originated outside, but later permeated the ecclesiastical institution. The poor in effect, took control of the Church and in doing so forced it to reconsider its basic thrust. The institutional approach by contrast, adopts a somewhat different posture. Generally speaking, it defines the Church's newfound option for the lower-classes in terms of an elite response to both societal crises and institutional needs.

Vallier (1968) for example argues that the recent modifications within the Latin American Church, signalled by increased centralization, the development of a lay apostolate, and the adoption of a social ideology relevant to the masses, were initiated by the hierarchy in response to three institutionally-related challenges. These were: 1) the rise of new value movements in Latin America, such as Protestantism, socialism, and spiritism; 2) the need for increased levels of institutional integration so as to keep pace with a modernizing milieu; and 3) the pressure emanating

from international Catholicism for the Latin American Church to awaken to its social responsibilities.

Following a similar line of reasoning, Della Cava (1975: 21) interprets institutional and ideological renewal within the Brazilian Church in particular, as an attempt to solve the grave crisis which it had undergone in the post-war period. This crisis, claims Della Cava, was distinguished by two basic features. The first of these was the collapse of the Church's leadership structure following the death of Cardinal Leme. (Leme, it will be recalled, presided over the Brazilian Church's return to influence during the Vargas years). The second dilemma facing the Church was the erosion of its religious monopoly. This latter problem was brought about by: 1) the endemic lack of clergy in Brazil, made especially acute in the wake of a rapidly expanding population; 2) a persistent low level of religiosity among the nominally Catholic masses; and 3) the growth of Protestantism and certain popular movements (especially on the political left) which found fertile soil for development in the ever worsening living conditions of the lower-classes. The threat posed by this last phenomenon in particular has also been interpreted by Sanders (1980: 8) as a decisive factor strengthening the hierarchy's resolve to move symbolically closer to the poor.

The most completely developed explanation of the institutional genre however, is offered by Bruneau. Bruneau

essentially reaffirms the argument put forth by Vallier, Della Cava, and Sanders, and argues that it was clearly the hierarchy which led the Brazilian Church down the social justice path. What distinguishes his approach from the others though, is that it attempts to understand Church strategy since 1950 as more than simply a knee-jerk reaction to extant social conditions, and or to the waning presence of Catholicism among the masses.

Historically, claims Bruneau, the goal of the Brazilian Church has been influence, which it seeks in order to fulfill its temporal mission of salvation. Up until recently, it sought to implement this goal by forging an institutional alliance with the State. During the 1950's however, confronted with both the grim reality of the social situation in Brazil and the imminent threats to its survival (as mentioned previously by Vallier and Della Cava), the Church began to re-orient its operational method, opting for an independent strategy of 'pre-influence'. This strategy, which until today largely remains in effect, advocates that society as a whole should be transformed, not as an end in itself, but to make religious influence inherently meaningful in the near future (Bruneau, 1982: 50). The Church has changed then, "not due to short-run strategies," states Bruneau (1984: 24), "but in pursuit of long-run visions of society which are based in theology."

The institutional approach as articulated above has come under attack from both Liberationist and other sources. Grassroots theorists such as Souza (1978) and Palacio (1979) have criticized Bruneau and others for example, for being too elite-oriented, and ignoring the fundamental role of social class in stimulating change within the Church. As Bruneau (1984: 29) has pointed out however, these and other grassroots theorists have in the final analysis reached conclusions which are barely distinguishable from his own. This is true at least insofar as they have been forced to recognize that the alterations which have occurred have of necessity relied upon the goodwill of the hierarchy for their implementation.

Advocates of the institutional approach have also been criticized by other authors with no visible ties to Liberation Theology. Mainwaring (1982: 7) has argued that the institutional approach has adopted too narrow a view of Church interests (i.e. as seeking influence), and that the goals of the Church, ostensibly oriented by such interests, are in any case less than explicitly formulated. Bruneau (1984: 32) quite correctly responds however, that Mainwaring has confused Church goals with the success with which they are undertaken. That the Church has clearly defined goals, he claims, is evident from Church documents, "but what is peculiar about them is the difficulty of realizing whether it is successful in implementing them."

Contrasting Interpretations of the Brazilian CEBs

The debate within the literature with regard to the true origins of the 'new' Brazilian Church has had an understandably profound effect on interpretations of the CEB phenomenon in Brazil. Simply stated, the grassroots theorists see the CEBs as evidence of the popular take-over of the Church. The institutionalists however, disagree. They tend to see the CEBs as the concretization of Church policy which has increasingly favoured lay participation especially among the poor. In their view, the poverty of the people is not in itself a direct stimulus to self-liberating class action which subsequently reacts back upon the Church. Instead, it is the point from which the priests and other religious personnel begin their work towards the realization of the Church's stated aims.

In the sections which follow, we shall attempt to compare and contrast the grassroots and institutional views of the Brazilian CEBs along three conceptual axes. These are: 1) the conditions underlying the emergence of the CEBs; 2) their internal structure; and 3) their overall orientation and subsequent implications for Brazilian society.

Conditions Underlying the Emergence of the CEBs

According to grassroots theorists such as Barreiro (1982), Betto (1981; 1983), C. Boff (1980), L. Boff (1981;

1983), Deelen (1980), and Pretto (1983), the CEBs cannot be understood simply as a new movement within the Church. They represent instead the spontaneous manifestation of the 'true' Church of the Apostles, which is arising once again in the midst of contemporary social conflicts. In practice, they emerge in response to natural conditions of existence, and subsequently serve as a kind of vanguard, demonstrating the path of liberation to the poor.

The historical antecedents of this liberating vanguard may be found in various locations or types of lay groups, depending upon the author consulted. The first CEB prototypes, states Betto (1983: 494) for example, emerged in the Dioceses of Natal and Volta Redonda in or around 1960. These groups, he claims, were initially involved in helping the local clergy to carry out certain parish functions:

The pioneer CEBs helped in sacramental preparation, in the distribution of certain sacraments, in catechesis and the organization of parish movements, as well as in the preparation of the mass.

Pretto (1983: 23) by contrast, argues that the forerunners of the CEBs were the scores of Bible circles which had emerged in Brazil in the latter half of the 1950's. It was within these small groups, he states, that the poor first discovered profound analogies between the Israelites' search for the promised land, and their own desperate plight.

Irrespective however, of their divergent views with regard to the structural roots of the CEB phenomenon,

grassroots theorists generally agree upon the factors which give rise to the CEBs as we now know them. CEB formation, it is claimed, is inextricably linked to the awakening of the dominated classes to the oppressive conditions of their existence. The groups in fact, to cite Barreiro (1982: 3) and Repges (1976), multiply spontaneously as the people come together within them in response to their basic needs for better housing, jobs, health care, and so forth.

The CEBs are thus ecclesial communities which however, proliferate in response to temporal stimuli. They do not, according to the grassroots view, emerge as a result of the implementation of a socially progressive ideology. If anything, progressive religious ideas are seen as being enhanced and promoted as a direct consequence of the CEBs' worldly appearance. As evidence of the groups' 'pre-ideological' origin, both Pretto (1983: 23) and Betto (1981: 16) carefully point out that the CEBs became active prior to the Second Vatican Council, which in effect first defined the Church's new social mission. Barreiro (1982: 6) does concede that the groups may have in fact emerged contemporaneously with Vatican II. He strongly asserts however, that in any case, "on a purely historical basis, no appropriate causal relationship between [the two events] can be proven."

The institutional view contrasts sharply with that adopted by the grassroots theorists, and strongly emphasizes the role of the institutional Church in stimulating the CEB

phenomenon. In this respect, the institutionalists appear to have come down firmly on the side of the Brazilian bishops. In the eyes of the episcopate, the CEBs by and large have developed as a result of the pro-CEB position adopted some 17 years ago at Medellin. "The base communities which in 1968 were only an incipient phenomenon, have [since] matured and multiplied," the Brazilian bishops state in a recent document concerning the CEBs (CNBB, 1983a: 5). Consequently, they further emphasize in this same statement, the groups represent "a strictly ecclesial phenomenon, born in the breast of the institutional Church."

CEB analysts such as Michel (1982), Pastor (1977) and Guimarães (1978) generally concur that the groups ultimately spring from the heart of the Church's institutional structure, and not alongside it, as grassroots theorists seem to suggest. Pastor (1977: 43, 48) in fact, argues that it is the local parish church which normally serves as the first 'base community', from which other nascent groups emerge.

In contrast to the grassroots view, Bruneau (1982: 129) as well asserts that the CEBs do not emerge spontaneously or haphazardly. Rather, they are the result of official Church strategies. In adopting such strategies designed to promote CEB formation, claims Bruneau, the hierarchy was effectively able to solve a number of dilemmas facing the Church. Through the CEBs for example, it

discovered a means for stimulating greater lay participation in the Church, thus compensating for the inherent lack of religious personnel within the institution. In addition, the CEBs provided the Church with an appropriate way to clearly express its newfound 'option for the poor'. For both Bruneau and Sanders (1980: 9) finally, the groups were instrumental in allowing the Brazilian Church to forge new and more direct links with the lower-classes, and consequently to increase its influence among this previously neglected sector of the population.

Concrete evidence for the institutional view of CEB promotion, is provided by two principal sources. Bruneau's (1982: 109) own studies first of all, indicate that the CEBs seem to sprout up especially where the local bishop or other Church authorities have adopted an attitude favourable to their existence. Secondly, a CNBB-sponsored study of CEB formation also pointed to a direct link between the emergence of the groups and institutional planning. "In those regions," stated the report,

where there exists a Joint Pastoral Plan in which the community line is defined as a priority task, the CEBs encounter a very favourable climate for their emergence and growth (CNBB, 1981: 45).

Internal Structure and Leadership of the CEBs

The grassroots approach rejects of course the argument that the CEBs owe their existence to pastoral

planning. The Church, they insist, merely provides a space within which the phenomenon can grow.

Grassroots theorists will admit however, that to a certain extent, 'pastoral agents' from within the institutional Church are necessary to engage the liberation process among the poor. These pastoral agents are normally priests, nuns, or active laypeople who are not normally of lower-class origin. But, as Barreiro (1982: 30) has stressed, where such personnel are active, they do tend to share the life of the poor, suffering as do the oppressed. "Many," adds Betto (1981: 18), "leave their families and jobs to engage in strictly pastoral work...They live in lower-class neighbourhoods [and] earn little more than the minimum salary."

Insofar as they work closely with the people, the pastoral agents, regardless of their social class origins, are thus considered to be 'organic intellectuals' (C. Boff, 1980a: 216). As such, claim grassroots theorists, they do not directly initiate or direct the CEBs, but merely guide the poor in their own interests. "The pastoral agent properly speaking," states Sassatelli (1983: 3) for instance,

does not form the CEB, but through the Gospel, personal testimony, and the Word, creates the conditions so that...the CEBs can grow.

Central in fact to the grassroots image of the CEBs is the belief that they are run not by external agents, but by and for the people, as democratic and fraternal

communities. Deelen (1980) for example, asserts that the groups are inherently egalitarian, maintaining a balanced leadership based upon elementary democratic principles. In addition, Hoornaert (1978: 486) has pointed to the opportunities which the CEBs have afforded women, who participate freely and equally in the groups' internal decision-making process.

Within the Church generally, the CEBs are seen moreover as bringing forth an unprecedented degree of participation in areas formerly off limits to the laity. According to Ramalho (1983: 18) for instance, CEB members have usurped many of the religious and administrative functions traditionally reserved for the priest, and have become more involved in the material and spiritual organization of the parish as a whole.

In response to the grassroots interpretation of the CEBs' self-sufficient, democratic and indeed democratizing character, the institutional view offers a number of valid criticisms. With regard to the pastoral agents first of all, it maintains that such religious personnel play a far greater role within the CEBs than the grassroots theorists would care to admit. The pastoral agents do not, claims Michel (1982: 123) simply accompany the groups, offering spiritual and material guidance as necessary. Rather, he states, they are an indispensable force, essential for the formation and development of the CEBs.

Michel's assertions have been backed up in a number of studies. In one, conducted for the CNBB by Demo (CNBB, 1977: 31), it was concluded that although lay initiative is slightly more likely to prevail in rural areas, the active presence of priests or other religious personnel in most cases is critical for CEB formation. Another nationwide survey conducted by Gregory (1973: 50) showed that 78 percent of the groups sampled had been initiated by a priest, or a priest in conjunction with a nun or layperson.

These and other studies have also brought to light the subsequent impact of the pastoral agents' presence in defining the CEBs' ideological orientation. Demo (CNBB, 1977: 39) notes for example, that where religious personnel are absent, lay leaders had difficulty in understanding the nature of the task which they had taken on. Michel (1982: 123) observes as well that there is a great tendency for the predominantly middle-class pastoral agents to impose their own particular ideological perspective on the CEB. Even though they may choose to live among the poor, he claims, such religious personnel demonstrate a surprising lack of sensitivity for their basic needs (eg. for food and housing). Instead, they tend to espouse the adoption of purely political solutions (eg. voting) which in effect reveal their essentially middle-class view of society.

Group structure as well is apparently affected by religious personnel. According to Gregory (1973: 61) for

example, pastoral agents have a profound effect on the level of social cohesion attained by the CEBs. Moreover, in his study of CEBs in Campina Grande, Ireland (1983: 14-18) demonstrates that Church agents tend to exercise considerable influence and authority within the CEBs for indefinite periods, as lay leaders are often reluctant to assume control.

But even where exclusively lay run and oriented groups have emerged, certain facts present themselves which contradict grassroots theorists' idyllic view of inherent CEB democracy. Upon studying the CEBs, Demo (1977: 28), Oliveira (1983: 94) and Ireland (1983: 13) have all observed that within most groups there exists a sizable body of laypersons who do not identify with the Church's new-found 'option for the poor'. This in turn has caused a good deal of division among group members which has been less than conducive to fraternal cooperation in decision-making.

The grassroots claim that the CEBs open up new opportunities for women is also open to debate. Their active presence within the group leadership for example, might be just as easily explained in terms of their traditional role within Latin American Catholicism, customarily described as the religion of women and children.⁷ As CEB leaders moreover, women are still subject to certain restrictions to which men are not. Both Libânio (1981: 303) and Oliveira

(1981: 651) have noted that during the National CEB Encounter at Itaici in 1981, there were many more men in attendance than women. This was attributable, claims Libânio, to the fact that some men would not allow their wives to travel unescorted to the conference. Machismo consequently, would appear to be far from dead in the CEBs.

The Orientation of the CEBs and their Implications for
Brazilian Society

Grassroots theorists interpret the CEBs as a unique development in the history of Brazilian Catholicism, sharing little in common with the more religiously oriented lay circles which have appeared since the turn of the century, or with the lay groups of the socially dominant middle and upper classes. In essence, they are seen as the leading edge of a newly renovated Church; as a predominantly class-based and oriented vanguard, engaging the poor in a process of religious and consequently, societal transformation.

One of the CEBs' most immediate social consequences, it is claimed, is the 'conscientization' or political awakening of the lower-classes. According to Barreiro (1982: 1), this occurs as the groups spread the 'Good News' of liberation among the poor on a mass scale. One important way the CEBs evangelize, states Betto (1981: 46) is by promoting the cooperative recognition and resolution of concrete neighbourhood problems. Projects designed to improve local

living conditions, known as revindicações, ostensibly help to instill in the people a sense of their own historic mission.

The masses, claims Betto:

in the first moment, mobilize around immediate interests: running water, lights for the neighbourhood, buses, cost of living, etc. It is through these concrete actions, arising from their immediate interests, that the popular classes begin to absorb and understand the force of their union, the fight for justice, the quest for a new world.

In addition to this function, the CEBs plant the seeds of enhanced democratic participation among the lower-classes, promoting a new kind of social responsibility and activism.

As L. Boff (1983: 469) explains:

...in the form in which they organize themselves, divide tasks, circulate information, and internally democratize power, they establish the miniature model of a new society. This in turn, translates itself into a generalized feeling of respect for others, a spirit of collaboration, a sense of permanent solidarity, a recognition of the value of the lower-classes, and support for the poorest of the poor.

The CEBs, in short, work to create a new, more just and egalitarian social order, in which the values of the Heavenly Kingdom will reign supreme. As Betto (1983: 503) has stated, the CEBs are:

...effectively bringing about, through the practices that they develop (in the ecclesial sphere), and instigate (among popular movements), a new model of society [which is] popular, democratic, and socialist.

Those adhering to the institutional approach are extremely reluctant to define the CEBs' essential thrust and

societal consequences with such ease and assurance. In the first place, both Wanderley (1981: 686) and Bruneau (1982: 132) point out that based on the broad range and type of activities undertaken by the groups, it is very difficult to provide any sort of all-encompassing portrait of the phenomenon as a whole. One thing Bruneau (1982: 140) did discover however, was that the CEBs were not exclusively communities of the poor and oppressed. As a strategy, he states, the groups relate to all social classes in Brazil.

Secondly, even if one were to accept that the CEBs are essentially a class-based phenomenon, there is much evidence to show that in actuality they represent something less than the liberating vanguard envisioned by grassroots theorists. As the Archbishop of São Paulo, Cardinal Arns (1983: 1131) has himself noted, most CEBs have attained only a rather elementary level of political consciousness. In fact, claims a Church study, there doggedly persists a basic lack of understanding among the membership of many CEBs, regarding the true purpose of the group:

It can be thus noted that frequently a great gap exists between enthusiasm for community work...and the comprehension of the ecclesial significance of the group. It is useful to question if the group is just another club, or a conscious group of reflection and action (CNBB, 1977: 45).

Gomes (1983: 515) moreover, observes that the process of acquiring true political consciousness, even where it does occur, is far from automatic. It is only through direct and

active participation in the day to day activities of his or her group that the individual learns of the path to liberation. Thus the CEBs, notes Oliveira (1983: 99) are far from being spontaneously political, although the membership may in time develop real consciousness. Certain factors however, adds Oliveira, work against the politicization of the group as a whole. In his study of CEBs in the Archdiocese of Vitória, Oliveira demonstrates for example that within the group there nearly always remains a substantial conservative element which refuses to abandon traditional religious concepts. According to C. Boff (cited in Elias, 1980: 52) moreover, there even exist whole CEBs which do not get beyond modernized forms of traditional Church associations, while others simply assume the hierarchical, dominating structure of the institutional Church.

The institutional approach stresses the fact as well that the CEBs are ultimately subject to the authority of the Church. They are thus constrained to act within certain specified bounds, and in no way act to transform the social order based on secular visions of how the world works.

Church authority, it is argued, acts both formally and informally. In the formal sense, the CNBB has laid down clear guidelines for CEB activation. The CEBs, claims a 1983 document entitled simply "Comunidades Eclesiais de base na Igreja do Brasil," must maintain:

a sincere and loyal connection between the community and its legitimate ministers, in a faithful adherence to the objectives of the Church, in a total opening-up to other communities and to the great community of the universal Church (CNBB 1983a: 12).

As essentially ecclesial groups they must not moreover, link themselves directly to purely secular movements; especially political parties. Aside from illegitimately lending such movements their religious stamp, the CEBs, it is claimed:

would [also] lose their identity if, in accommodating popular movements, they were to alter their style of living and their explicit values of faith (CNBB, 1983a: 29).

Within their own dioceses, the bishops are of course relatively free to apply such guidelines in accordance with their own personal attitudes and beliefs (Bruneau, 1982: 93). Some in fact, leave the CEBs considerable maneuvering room, while others have adopted much more rigid laws for CEB activation. The Archbishop of Rio de Janeiro, for example, Cardinal Eugenio Sales, recently laid down a number of stringent regulations requiring, among other things, that: 1) the CEBs be initiated by priests in accordance with the 5th Pastoral Plan of Rio; 2) the material used in the CEBs be approved by local Church authorities; and 3) the CEBs in no way affiliate themselves with existing political parties (Sales, 1982: 31).

Irrespective of how they are applied however, the existence of general guidelines for CEB behaviour clearly

demonstrates the hierarchy's intention to keep the groups from falling prey to "non-approved ideas" (CNBB, 1977: 44). "All temptation of sectarianism within the CEBs," Pope John Paul II himself stated on a recent trip to Brazil, must be strictly avoided (quoted in CNBB, 1983a: 13).

In addition to formal constraints, as a belief system, Catholicism imposes certain informal restrictions on CEB members' freedom of thought and action. Cardoso (1982: 57) notes for example that behind reputed levels of ideological commitment and solidarity within the CEBs, there lies a high degree of social control which ensures homogeneity. Such social control, she asserts, is rooted in the fact that the participants all adhere to the same Catholic faith, and generally subscribe to its teachings. Certain matters consequently, Cardoso states, "such as divorce, family planning, abortion, sexual relations before marriage, could only be discussed with great difficulty in the CEBs." This is true, she adds, even though "these are problems which frequently effect the day to day lives of the popular classes."

The CEB Literature and Sociological Theory

The majority of those embracing the grassroots approach are Catholic clergymen and theologians. In formulating their interpretation of the CEB phenomenon, they have relied heavily upon personal and even second-hand

reports, and appear to be as much interested in promoting the groups as in seeking to objectively describe a new and unique occurrence.

Conceptually, the grassroots theorists, as adherents of the Liberationist perspective, begin with an idea rooted in Marxian sociology, i.e. that Brazilian society is divided into two fundamentally opposing classes. Following Marx, they assert moreover, that the dominated class in Brazil has become increasingly aware of the mechanisms which maintain its subservience, and consequently has become locked in a revolutionary struggle designed to overthrow its oppressors.

At this point however, the grassroots approach introduces a twist into the standard Marxian paradigm, arguing that in Brazil religion has played an integral role in the class struggle. Marx, it will be recalled, allowed religious belief an essentially conservative function in society, as part of the repressive apparatus of the bourgeoisie (Marx, 1963: 43-4). Grassroots theorists however, adamantly claim that the revolutionary process is in large part occurring by way of the Catholic Church; or more specifically, that the ruling class is first being overthrown in the religious sphere, and only later in the societal context. The comunidades eclesiais de base are cited as evidence for this assertion. These groups, it is claimed, were formed within the Church by the oppressed masses, and

are now the leading edge of a renovated institution which seeks to bring forth the total liberation of the poor.

In their description of the role of pastoral agents in the liberating process, grassroots theorists again stray slightly from standard Marxian teachings, and appear to be following a distinctly Gramscian approach. Gramsci⁸ basically argues that the dominated class in society is at a fundamental disadvantage since it does not produce a sufficient quantity of 'home-grown' intellectuals who might clearly articulate the needs of the masses. During periods of social unrest however, some intellectuals originating in other classes, he states, can affiliate themselves with the lower-classes, thus in a sense becoming transplanted 'organic intellectuals'. For grassroots theorists, the predominantly middle-class pastoral agents represent just such a cadre, not simply organizing the poor from without, but helping them to find ways of effecting their own liberation.

To grassroots theorists and Liberationists generally, the fact that they utilize and build upon essentially Marxist concepts is not problematic. Few in fact would describe themselves as Marxists. Rather, they conceive of themselves as dedicated Christians, who merely employ a Marxist sociology in an effort to clarify the relationship between the Church and Brazilian society (McCann, 1981: 144-7). Such clarifications have done little though to allay the fears of many within the Vatican who reject any alliance between the

Church and the ghost of Karl Marx.⁹

Somewhat ironically, the explanatory paradigm developed by grassroots theorists in any case, probably has more in common with Weber than Marx and the Marxists. Weber after all, like Marx, did allow for the possibility of social action based upon class interest. But, unlike Marx, he also maintained that such interests could affect the religious sphere, insofar as religion does maintain a certain degree of autonomy within society. The religious sphere in turn, argues Weber, can react back on social structure, having far reaching effects on the life conduct of all social classes (Gerth & Mills, 1946: 268). Thus, the 'dialectical' explanation offered by the grassroots approach appears entirely consistent with the Weberian perspective.

In the final analysis however, the grassroots position cannot be described as essentially Weberian. This is because of the self-imposed limitations which force its exponents to see class conflict as the root and unitary cause of social and religious change. By contrast, in the true spirit of Weber, the institutional view employs a much more 'liberal' approach which seeks to understand the 'new' Church and the CEB phenomenon in their full complexity.

In introducing several of Weber's essays in their From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, Gerth and Mills (1946: 47) point out that Weber criticizes Marx for failing to

distinguish between what was economically determined, from what was economically relevant, and from what was simply economic. In asserting that the poverty of the people is the principal determining factor in the rise of the 'new' Church and the CEBs, Liberationists, claim institutional theorists, have fallen prey to the same trap. The institutionalists for their part, maintain that poverty or class position is instead merely a relevant or conditioning factor explaining a conscious decision on the part of the Church to 'preferentially opt for the poor'.

In making this assertion, institutional theorists appear to draw heavily on the work of Weber and others, such as Selznick (1953), Etzioni (1964), Thompson (1967) and Perrow (1967), who sought to understand the nature of bureaucratic organizations. For Weber (Gerth & Mills, 1946:228-30), bureaucracy "is the means for carrying 'community action' over into rationally ordered 'societal action'." It is a closed system, with its own unique raison d'etre, and a determined will to survive. The overall thrust of any bureaucracy, Weber adds, ultimately depends upon "the direction which the powers using the apparatus give it." Institutional goals, as determined by bureaucratic decision-makers, are not however set arbitrarily or in a vacuum. According to Etzioni (1964: 8), they are

often set in a complicated power play involving various individuals and groups within and without the organization, and by reference to values which

govern behaviour in general, and the specific behaviour of the relevant individuals and groups in a particular society.

States Selznick (1953: 10) similarly:

If we are to comprehend these bureaucratic machines....it is essential to think of an organization as a dynamic conditioning field which effectively shapes the behaviour of those who are attempting to remain at the helm. We can best understand the behaviour of officials when we are able to trace that behaviour to the needs and structure of the organization as a living social institution.

Oriented by this school of thought, institutional theorists see the Brazilian Church as a bureaucratic organization which seeks to act within the 'dynamic conditioning field' of Brazilian society. The hierarchy, in their view, has taken action in response to both the realities of the people's social condition, as well as to threats perceived to be undermining the Church's influence among the laity. The CEBs in particular, are simply one important means through which the Church seeks to achieve its institutional goals.

The institutional approach also demonstrates strong parallels with the theory of religious innovation developed by Weber (Gerth and Mills: 1946: 274). This is especially true where the perceived role of the pastoral agents comes into play. In Weber's view, the poor are essentially incapable of innovation in the religious sphere. Contradicting in fact a school of thought later developed by Worsely (1968) and Runciman (1966) among others,¹⁰ Weber

states that even the resentment born of a relatively deprived social condition is an insufficient inducement to religious change. The poor, briefly stated, require prophets, redeemers, to lead them to a new religious awakening. Such prophets do not however, originate from among the depressed classes. Nor, in direct contrast to Gramsci's assertions, do their doctrines emerge from what Weber terms the "intellectual horizon" of the poor.

An extremely important element in developing new religious orientations, states Weber (Gerth & Mills, 1946:284), are 'civic strata'; i.e. the artisans, tradesmen, and shop-keepers who come to settle within strictly urban areas. In his view, these strata are somewhat unique, owing to their particular world-view:

The tendency towards a practical rationalism in conduct is common to all civic strata, it is conditioned by their way of life, which is greatly detached from economic bonds to nature. Their whole existence has been based upon technological or economic calculations, and upon the mastery of nature and man, however primitive the means at their disposal.

As a consequence of such beliefs, the civic strata, Weber claims, have been traditionally oriented towards religious ideas that call for action in the world (eg. asceticism), and are reluctant to attach themselves to religions advocating "an inward or contemplative surrender to God." Once adopted among these strata moreover, action-oriented belief systems tend to permeate the entire social structure.

In a very real sense, the various pastoral agents involved with the CEBs share much in common with Weber's civic strata. As Michel (1982: 123) points out, the bulk of these agents are recruited from the urban middle-classes, and though they might in a sense be considered intellectuals, are nevertheless the sons and daughters of small businessmen, sales personnel, and professionals. They carry with them a call for action which has its roots historically in the city; whether in the universities, political parties, or charitable and social reform circles. It is from a solidly urban middle-class base consequently, that they seek to proselytize among the poor in the rural and urban outlying areas; in other words, among a constituency with which they have had little physical contact for most of their lives.

Indeed, grassroots theorists themselves might well be conceived of in similar terms. Aron (1957) however, provides a more apt description of this group, and of Liberation Theology as a whole. Like Weber, Aron believes that the lower-classes are not inherently volatile, but may become so, dependent upon the presence of outside leadership. Such leadership, states Aron, is provided primarily by intellectuals, who are firmly possessed of the belief that the poor are the carriers of a sacred social mission, owing to their purity, and universality of degradation. This description would appear to fit the Liberation Theologists

quite nicely, who as a group, invest absolute faith in the masses. They are thus in a sense revolutionaries, but not precisely of a type described by Aron. For Aron, revolutionaries are intellectuals in search of a religion. The Liberationists of course, already have a religion, although they seek ultimately to transform it in accordance with their own particular world-view.

Central Objectives of the Dissertation

Couched within opposing Marxist and Weberian theories of social and religious change, we are thus presented with two distinct interpretations of the nature and thrust of the Brazilian CEB phenomenon. But to what extent, we must ask, is each of these views empirically valid? Is it true, as the grassroots theory maintains, that the groups are a fundamentally class-based and oriented phenomenon; or, as institutionalists suggest, do the CEBs represent a strategy employed by the hierarchy in response to perceived societal and institutional needs? In other words, in what measure does social class, as opposed to pastoral planning, contribute to what the CEBs are and what they do?

This study attempts to answer this question, and thus to help resolve an important debate within the CEB literature. Specifically, this will be accomplished through an intensive examination of the structure and orientation of a sample group of CEBs located in the Archdiocese of São

Paulo. These groups were chosen from a variety of social and geographical settings, and were carefully investigated utilizing both a qualitative and a quantitative methodology.

The validity of the grassroots and institutional views will be tested through an examination of empirical data in light of three basic hypotheses. For purposes of analysis, we shall assume in these hypotheses that the grassroots interpretation of the CEBs' nature and thrust is essentially correct. The acceptance of the hypotheses in whole or part therefore, will signify an acceptance of the grassroots over the institutional approach. Their rejection however, will be taken to mean that the reverse is true, i.e. that the CEBs are better defined in terms of institutional as opposed to class-related factors.

Specifically, our research hypotheses are as follows:

1. As a class-based and oriented phenomenon, the CEBs are an ideologically homogeneous collectivity.

Are the CEBs by and large communities of the poor and oppressed which have collectively embarked on the path to liberation? Or, do ideological differences exist between or even within groups? Do groups from other classes exist which have also adopted a progressive orientation?

2. As a class-based and oriented phenomenon, the CEBs are inherently democratic.

What is the structure of leadership within the groups? Are the CEBs an accommodating space where all are free to participate? Or, is it true that elite structures often arise as in most associations? What other barriers exist which might limit the equal participation of all?

3. As a class-based and oriented phenomenon, the CEBs maintain a new and unique relationship with the Church

and rely little on institutional support.

Are the CEBs a new force within the Church, weakly tied to hierarchical authority and free to chose their own course? Or, are the groups subject to rigid ecclesial control? More importantly perhaps, what is the exact role of the pastoral agent within the CEBs? Do such individuals represent an active orienting force? Or, do they merely guide what is a natural process?

The diversity of our sample CEBs will allow for these hypotheses to be tested in two distinct ways. As previously indicated, the groups to be studied were chosen from a variety of areas within São Paulo. Some, for example, were selected from predominantly lower-class districts of the Archdiocese. These in effect, represent the type of CEB which the grassroots theorists would consider to be genuine. Other groups however, were found in distinctly middle-class neighbourhoods, and though formally CEB-like in character, would not generally speaking, be considered authentic by the grassroots view, owing to the elevated social location of such CEBs.¹¹

Using the data generated from the sample thus defined, we shall in effect, be testing each hypothesis separately while testing the null hypothesis with respect to the two types of groups (i.e. lower and middle-class). On the one hand, as the lower-class CEBs conform most closely to the grassroots understanding of what a CEB is, we shall be looking for characteristics of such groups which either substantiate or negate the hypotheses directly. On the other hand, data from the middle-class CEBs will be used to test

the basic premise underlying all such hypotheses, i.e. that the CEBs are class-based and oriented. If for example, we are able to show that there are no differences between lower and middle-class groups as they relate to the hypotheses, then we must conclude that class, per se, cannot be the primary determinant of what in actual fact a CEB is, and what it does.

We might say at this point that the data, applied in either manner, do not generally support the research hypotheses. In the first place, the lower-class CEBs demonstrate themselves to be an extremely heterogeneous collectivity. Some for example, pursue distinctly political ends, as grassroots theorists have stated, but there are others which avoid all talk of 'liberation'. In addition, some groups are more democratic than others, and some more dependent upon the 'guidance' of pastoral agents. The middle-class groups, for their part, also exhibit divergent tendencies, and along identical lines. Only in a very limited sense therefore, may we talk about class as defining CEB character. Rather, it would appear, as the institutional view suggests, that the CEBs are a phenomenon nurtured in accordance with needs and desires which transcend elementary class interests, i.e. those of the institutional Church.

Organization of the Study

In Chapter 2 immediately following, we shall present a brief socioeconomic and political overview of the Greater São Paulo area where our research was undertaken. This will be followed by an examination of Church structure within the Archdiocese of São Paulo, and a discussion of the extent to which the local hierarchy has adapted itself to the dictates of the 'new' Brazilian Church.

In Chapter 3, we shall present a statistical overview of the CEB phenomenon in general in the Archdiocese, and will discuss some of the factors which appear to affect CEB emergence and growth. Subsequent to this, we shall examine and compare statistical data on the organizational structure and activities offered by our sample lower and middle-class groups respectively. Immediately following will be a similar analysis of the attitudes and behaviour of actual CEB members.

In Chapters 4 and 5, we shall present much more specific data on the physical location, structure and orientation of each individual group in our sample. The qualitative findings introduced in these Chapters, will then be discussed and analyzed in Chapter 6.

The Conclusion will be devoted to a summary and analysis of the overall findings of our study. In addition, we shall attempt to assess the advantages and shortcomings of

the study, and to make some predictions for the future of the CEBs and the Brazilian Church as a whole.

The mechanics of the sampling and data analysis processes finally, will be discussed in an appendix immediately following the Conclusion. Other methodological issues arising from the research will also be dealt with in this section.

NOTES

¹In 1937, Vargas established what he termed the Estado Novo (New State), implanting an authoritarian regime similar to corporatist regimes of the day in Portugal, Spain, and Italy. The Estado Novo endured until 1945, when Vargas was forced to step down after 15 years as Brazil's president. Some 5 years later however, after the reintroduction of democracy in Brazil, he was re-elected president of the republic, serving approximately 4 years before committing suicide in 1954. For details of the Estado Novo, and of Vargas' political career in general, see Bourne (1974), Carone (1976), Dulles (1967), Erickson (1977), and Skidmore (1967).

²Brazilian Catholic Action was first established in 1935, as part of an international lay movement oriented toward promoting the faith. In the 1950's, it was re-organized however, along European lines, and directed its evangelizing activities among specific sectors of the Brazilian population (see Bruneau, 1974: 45, 94-5).

³For an overview of the development and impact of other progressive programmes sponsored by the Church in the Diocese of Natal during this period, see Camargo (1971).

⁴The nature and impact of military government in Brazil has also been described by a number of other authors including Ames (1973), Erickson (1977), Flynn (1978), Stepan (1973), and Weil (1976).

⁵Following the coup, all existing political parties, some 14 to be precise, were dissolved. These were replaced with two officially sanctioned parties: a party of the government called ARENA (National Renovating Alliance), and an 'opposition' party, the MDB (Brazilian Democratic Movement). The ability of the MDB to actually oppose the government in congress however, was severely limited by several amendments to the constitution arbitrarily imposed by the military (Roett, 1972: 150).

⁶McCann (1981) offers an excellent analysis of both Liberation Theology, and the career histories of its exponents in Latin America.

⁷For a description of Catholicism as it has traditionally been practiced in Brazil, see Gallet (1970), de Kadt (1967; 1970), Camargo (1973), Medina (1971), and Willems (1968).

⁸This discussion of Gramsci, and the applicability of his work to the grassroots understanding of the CEBs, is derived from Gramsci (1978), Adriance (1984), and Bruneau (1984).

⁹In recent months tension has increased between the Brazilian Church (in which there has been a growing acceptance of Liberation Theology) and the Vatican. The dispute originally began as a war of words between Cardinal Ratzinger, Prefect of the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and prominent Liberationists such as Leonardo and Clodovis Boff (see 'Uma nova teologia', and 'O grito', 1984: 46-7). Leonardo Boff was in fact called to appear before Ratzinger to give a full accounting of his pronouncements, published in a recent book entitled Igreja, Carisma e Poder (see 'Um aviso de Roma', 1984: 92). The Vatican moreover, has stepped up its vigilance of the Brazilian Church in general and recently sent envoys to seminaries in São Paulo to verify that theological teaching in the Archdiocese has not strayed from the lines established by the Holy See ('Vaticano observa', 1984: 6).

¹¹Over the protestations of grassroots theorists, we shall, for the time being, continue to use 'CEB' as a generic term covering all ecclesial communities regardless of their social location. Later in the study however, we shall want to nominally differentiate between the lower and middle-class groups, so that the two group-types may be compared. In the case of the former group-type, the term L-CEB will be adopted, while in the latter, M-CEB will be used.

CHAPTER TWO: THE CHURCH IN SÃO PAULO

São Paulo: A Social and Economic Portrait

The data to be used in our study were collected in the Greater São Paulo area, which is located in the southeastern region of Brazil (see Map I, p. 388). With a population of nearly 14 million, resident in an 8,000 square kilometre area, São Paulo is Brazil's largest metropolis. It is also the nation's (if not the world's) fastest growing city. Since 1960, its population has nearly tripled, and fully 50 percent of its present inhabitants were born outside the area. Currently, Greater São Paulo is growing at about 4.5 percent a year, down slightly from the 7 percent annual growth rate registered during the peak years of the late 1960's and early 1970's (Emplasa, 1982: 51, 66-75; IBGE, 1980a: 388).

To a considerable extent, it is industrial development which has been responsible for São Paulo's phenomenal growth during the past two decades. Presently, São Paulo is Brazil's leading manufacturing centre, and produces everything from umbrellas to diesel trucks, armaments, and high-technology electronic equipment. With only 11 percent of Brazil's total population, São Paulo

possesses in fact approximately 22 percent of the nation's 120,000 industrial establishments. These companies turn out goods and services worth fully one-quarter of the country's annual gross product. They employ moreover 29 percent of all industrial workers in Brazil, who together produce not less than 35 percent of the value of all nationally manufactured goods each year (Emplasa, 1982: 90, 303-7; IBGE, 1982: 387).

Not surprisingly therefore, standards of living in Greater São Paulo are among the highest in Brazil. In 1982 for example, per capita income was approximately US \$3400, some 56 percent higher than the national figure of US \$2183 (BCCC, 1982: 6). In addition, São Paulo possesses far fewer low wage earners than does the nation on average. Where in 1980 38 percent of all declared wage-earners in Brazil took home the minimum salary¹ or less each month, only 13 percent of Paulistanos² fell into this category. Fully 22 percent of São Paulo's workforce moreover, earned in excess of 5 minimum salaries, as compared with only 11 percent of Brazilian wage-earners generally (Emplasa, 1982: 90; IBGE, 1980d: 267-315; 1982: 135-6).

As the economic engine of Brazil, São Paulo is not however, without its problems. Faced with unusually high population growth rates, the city has not for example, been able to keep up with demands for basic infrastructural services. While in 1980, 80 percent of all homes did have running water, over half (53%) were not connected to

municipal sewer systems (IBGE, 1980c: 202-3).³ In addition, a recent government agency report showed that within the municipality of São Paulo proper, there exists a severe shortage of adequate housing. Twenty-eight percent of all municipal residents, stated the report, live in detached houses which have been illegally converted to multi-family dwellings. Another 22 percent reside in rudimentary self-constructed homes, while some 5 percent are forced to live in hastily built shanty-towns or favelas ('Habituação', 1984; 'Mulher', 1984).

In recent years moreover, the local economy has been suffering under the effects of an economic downturn in Brazil generally.⁴ Since the late 1970's, the nation's economy has been in recession, hampered by skyrocketing inflation rates and a huge foreign debt which now totals nearly 100 billion dollars (U.S.). The solutions applied to ease the crisis, it might be added, appear to have done more harm than good. For example, in response to conditions imposed by the International Monetary Fund in return for debt-relief aid, real wages have been capped and government spending reduced. Such actions have not only created a good deal of social hardship by increasing unemployment and decreasing purchasing power, but have also further reduced the strength of the nation's already fragile internal market (LARR, 1982).

In industrial São Paulo, the effects of the recession are everywhere apparent. Unemployment, unofficially estimated at 15 percent of the workforce,⁵ has placed thousands of individuals on the streets where, due to the absence of any comprehensive welfare system, they have become itinerant street vendors or panhandlers. Having lost their homes and possessions, it is not uncommon to find the most desperate of the unemployed living together with their families under bridges or in public parks.

Massive unemployment has contributed moreover to the overall crime rate in São Paulo, especially with regard to armed robbery and homicide. During the month of April, 1984 for instance, an average of 130 robberies and 14 murders were reported to police each day. Such statistics, claims a recent magazine article, have placed São Paulo firmly within the top ten of the world's most dangerous cities ('O brasileiro', 1984).

For those lucky enough to remain employed in such difficult times, inflation, which is currently running at 9 to 12 percent per month, presents serious difficulties ('Apesar', 1984). Despite periodic adjustments designed to protect low income workers, salaries in São Paulo have not kept pace with the cost of living. A recent study calculated for instance, that the May 1984 adjustment in the minimum wage was actually 55 percentage points below the annual inflation rate of 235 percent ('Cálculo', 1984). The earning

power of many Paulistanos consequently is continually eroding, and at a time when they may be called upon to aid extended family members who have lost their own means of support.

The recession in São Paulo finally, has exacerbated what is in all likelihood the city's most pressing dilemma: that of social inequality. The gap between rich and poor is perhaps most painfully evident in the Municipality of São Paulo, which lies at the heart of the metropolitan region (see Map II, p. 389). In spite of the apparent wealth and sophistication of its central core and adjacent districts, over 70 percent of the municipality's 9 million inhabitants live within an encircling ring of poverty covering about 80 percent of the city's total 1500 square kilometre area (GESp, 1977: 5-7; Emplasa, 1982: 51, 77).

It is in this peripheral area that the city has been growing fastest in recent years, attracting hundreds of thousands of migrants from neighbouring Minas Gerais and various other Northeastern states, who came to find work in the factories of São Paulo (IBGE, 1980a: 477, 484). During the 1960's, the southern and eastern peripheral zones were in fact growing at a fantastic 11 and 15 percent annually. Today, they continue to grow at a rate of approximately 7 to 8 percent, which is twice the municipal average (Emplasa, 1982: 77-8).

Family incomes on the periphery are extremely low, averaging at least 3 to 4 times less than those in more affluent areas of São Paulo. The proportion of low-income families (i.e. those earning under 5 minimum salaries per month) moreover, is quite high. Where only about 21 percent of all resident families in the middle-class suburbs of Ibirapuera and Perdizes earn less than 5 MS (minimum salaries), nearly two thirds (64%) of families in the sprawling districts of Itaquera and Capela do Socorro subsist on this amount (IBGE, 1980c: 88).

The quality of life on the outskirts of São Paulo, a recent study relates, is best described as 'precarious'. This is true for a number of reasons. First of all, housing tends to be of the self-constructed type, with little or no adherence to building codes or basic safety requirements (PCJP, 1978: 41). In addition, the relatively high cost of building materials restricts the size of homes, resulting in extremely crowded living conditions for most families. In the peripheral sub-district of Brasilândia for example, there are on average 3 persons per bedroom, compared to only 1.5 in other more affluent areas such as Pinheiros (IBGE, 1980c: 184).

Having to locate on the periphery (because of the low land costs), also means being far from one's place of work. Transport studies have shown that the average worker spends 3 to 4 hours each day travelling to and from his or her job.

To make matters worse, São Paulo's transit system has consistently proven unable to transport the 8 million commuters who use it daily with any degree of comfort, safety, or reliability (PCJP, 1978: 35-6).

Other problems on the periphery arise from the almost total lack of infrastructure in the area. Most suburban streets for example, are unpaved, and though many areas are now served by electricity, street lighting is frequently lacking (PCJP, 1978: 32). Police protection is all but non-existent, and this, combined with poor lighting, have tended to aggravate an already soaring crime rate in many poor neighbourhoods ('Criminalidade', 1984).

The majority of homes outside the central area of São Paulo moreover, are not connected to sewers. In most neighbourhoods, raw sewage is simply allowed to run down drainage ditches and into the nearest stream. In the municipality's eastern districts, this problem is especially acute. In 1982 for example, only 8,000 of an estimated 280,000 households in the São Miguel administrative district⁶ were connected with the city's sewer system (Emplasa, 1982: 77, 397).

Finally, health services are all but absent on the periphery of São Paulo. Hospitals and first-aid centres tend to be located in the more central affluent areas of the city. The centre core and surrounding neighbourhoods in fact,

contain within their boundaries 57 percent of all the hospitals and treatment centres in São Paulo, serving only 17 percent of the city's total population. By contrast, the eastern districts, with a similar percentage of the population, have but 2 percent of all such facilities (Emplasa, 1982: 408). The unequal distribution of health services shows dramatically in the infant mortality rates in these same two areas. In the centre, the rate for 1980 was 40 deaths per 1,000 live births, while the rate for the poorer eastern districts was nearly twice that, at 74 (Emplasa, 1982: 419).

The Church in São Paulo

Given the size of the Roman Catholic population which it serves, the Church in Brazil is able to maintain only a weak institutional presence throughout the country. Nevertheless, it is still a very large and complex organization. In terms of sheer manpower for example, its strength is in fact quite impressive. Within the upper hierarchy, there are to be precise, 49 archbishops, 282 bishops, 22 bishop prelates, and 2 abbots. In addition to these personnel are some 12,711 secular and religious priests, 2,526 men and 27,677 women in orders. All such personnel are situated within 242 ecclesiastical units, a number which includes 36 archdioceses, 187 dioceses, and 16 prelatures (CNBB, 1984: 95).

The territorial unit corresponding to our research area is the Archdiocese of São Paulo (see Map III, p. 390). Founded as a diocese in 1745, it was elevated to its present status by papal proclamation in 1908. Since that time it has had but 5 archbishops (Guia Geral, 1983: 9).

The Archdiocese currently has an area of about 3300 square kilometres, representing 42 percent of the total Greater São Paulo region. Specifically, it covers all of the Municipality of São Paulo and several smaller townships on the city's western and southwestern boundaries. Its population of over 10 million makes São Paulo the most populous archdiocese in the world (Guia Geral, 1983; Emplasa, 1982: 51, 60).

Since 1970, the Archdiocese has been governed by Cardinal Archbishop Paulo Evaristo Arns, who is aided by 10 auxiliary bishops. Of these 10 bishops, 9 preside directly over the major Episcopal Regions which together make up the Archdiocese. These Episcopal Regions are further divided into some 48 sectors and 368 parishes. Serving the faithful are about 450 secular priests and approximately 700 priests in orders. Very little information is available on the personal backgrounds of these personnel, or on the number and characteristics of men and women religious in the Archdiocese. Data on the 368 pastors in São Paulo reveals however that about 44 percent come from countries other than

Brazil, and that their mean age is 52 years (Guia Geral, 1983; CERIS, 1977).

Within its boundaries, the Archdiocese owns or controls a number of religious institutions and properties. There are for example, no less than 11 secular seminaries and 26 others belonging to various religious orders, as well as 5 ecclesiastical study centres, an archive, 10 higher learning institutes including a major university (Pontifícia Universitária Católica), and literally dozens of colégios offering elementary and secondary school courses. The Archdiocese also publishes a weekly newspaper known simply as O São Paulo. The business of managing all such concerns is undertaken by a team of financial administrators who are responsible to an 8 member conselho de administração, led by Cardinal Arns.

The day to day 'religious' work of the Archdiocese is carried out by a host of comissões (commissions) and ecclesial task-forces known as pastorais. These are staffed and run by clergymen, nuns, and laypersons from throughout São Paulo. All such organizations are coordinated by the Secretariado Arquidiocesano de Pastoral which is in constant contact with Cardinal Arns. The Secretariado de Pastoral consists of 5 core members situated at the central cúria, and representatives of the 9 Episcopal Regions. Decision-making with regard to Church programmes consequently, tends to be

conducted in an open and consultative manner (Guia Geral, 1983).

The Emergence and Development of a Preferential Option for
the Poor and Oppressed in the Archdiocese

Given its various holdings and activities, the Church is clearly visible throughout the city of São Paulo. Its institutional presence however, stands in stark contrast to its presence in the hearts and minds of the laity. Though Brazilian census figures show that over 85 percent of paulistanos list Roman Catholicism as their faith (IBGE, 1980a: 64, 76), Church studies indicate that only about 10 percent of these ever attend mass. Fewer than one percent, it has been further shown, can be considered genuine engajados, that is, parishioners who maintain regular contact with the Church (Baraglia, 1983: 97).

The Church's institutional structure though, is not presently directed towards simply filling the pews. Rather, the Church aims to enhance its lay following in qualitative as opposed to quantitative terms. Following in the direction of the Brazilian Church with the CNBB at its helm, the Archdiocese of São Paulo has become institutionally oriented towards a preferential option for the lower-classes. Consequently, it seeks to induce the faithful to become better Christians, not by praying harder or more often, but

by working in the interests of the poor and oppressed for a more just and egalitarian society.

The 1984 General Meeting of the Archdiocese, which brought together a broad spectrum of lay and religious personnel from throughout São Paulo, clearly demonstrated this commitment to social justice. Six of the seven issues discussed at the conference were concerned not with religious problems, but with the reality and consequences of poverty and oppression. Topics debated were the workers' situation in São Paulo, drug use and alienation among youth, housing problems, abandoned minors, family disharmony and disintegration, and the concentration and control of information by the mass media ('A Igreja," 1984).

The evolution of the social justice theme in São Paulo over the past 15 years owes much to Cardinal Archbishop Paulo Evaristo Arns. Born in southern Brazil, Dom Paulo, like many paulistanos, is a migrant. A highly educated man, he studied theology and philosophy while at Franciscan seminaries in Parana and Rio de Janeiro states, and later received a doctorate in literature from the Sorbonne in Paris. Before becoming Archbishop in 1970, he served for 4 years as auxiliary bishop in São Paulo, and spent 10 years prior to that as pastor of a lower middle-class parish in Petrópolis, Rio de Janeiro state (Bittencourt & Markum, 1979: 15).

During the course of his clerical career, Dom Paulo experienced a political awakening which closely parallels that of the Church as a whole in recent years. His biographers assert that he first became aware of a pressing need for social justice in Brazil during his years in Petrópolis (Bittencourt & Markum, 1979: 7-8). Here, he worked for a considerable length of time with a group of favelados (slum-dwellers), experiencing first hand the hardships of the people, and coming to understand their aspirations. It was not until some years after he had left Petropolis however, that Cardinal Arns became more directly involved in basic human rights issues. As auxiliary bishop of São Paulo, Dom Paulo had been asked in 1969 by his superior, then-Archbishop Agnello Rossi, to come to the aid of several Dominican priests who had been arrested by the government on charges of subversion. For Cardinal Arns, this was the beginning of a long association with the cause of political prisoners in São Paulo, which was to endure long after his appointment as Archbishop in 1970.

In defence of hundreds of churchmen and laypersons arbitrarily detained by the military between 1970 and 1978, Dom Paulo exhausted every means at his disposal. In 1972 for example, he published and distributed a statement entitled "Testemunha de Paz" (Testimony of Peace) which condemned the use of torture in São Paulo jails. This same concern was reiterated by Dom Paulo and his auxiliary bishops some 3

years later in a pamphlet called "Não Oprimas Teu Irmão" (Do Not Oppress Thy Brother), published following the death of imprisoned journalist Vladimir Herzog (Arns, 1979: 36). In addition to these statements, Cardinal Arns made extensive use of the Archdiocese newspaper O São Paulo and radio station Nove de Julho to expose instances of injustice, met frequently with government officials on behalf of prisoners and their families, and made regular prison visits to personally console dozens of individuals who had suffered mental and physical abuse at the hands of their captors. Such efforts earned him the respect of world leaders including U.S. President Jimmy Carter, with whom Cardinal Arns had met on a number of occasions (Bittencourt & Markum, 1979: 16; Santayana, 1983: 16).

His intense involvement with the political prisoners' cause during his first years as archbishop obviously left a lasting impression on the Cardinal. Recalling discussions he had had with the victims of torture for example, Dom Paulo recently related:

As a historian, I have studied ancient torture, from the Syrians to the Babylonians. I think that here we tortured more. There were more cruel forms here...What I heard related by the tortured, and what I read from them would make a feature-length film...That time was a very dark era (Santayana, 1983: 16).

Perhaps more importantly however, Cardinal Arns' association with political detainees in São Paulo helped him to develop

and clarify his role as defender of all the oppressed:

One day I confessed to myself alone: 'My God, I am becoming less the Archbishop of the city, and more the Archbishop of the prisoners and the tortured'. But I consoled myself with the idea that, in being the Archbishop of the prisoners and the tortured, I was being the Archbishop of the city (Santayana, 1983: 16).

Evidence of a growing concern for the poor and downtrodden generally in São Paulo, is found in the numerous initiatives launched by the Cardinal to promote the cause of social justice on several fronts after 1973. In that year, his first act was to sell the luxurious residence in which he had been living and to move to a more modest address. The proceeds of this sale were used to build community centres on the periphery of São Paulo, and thus to stimulate the formation of CEBs and other popular self-help organizations (Bittencourt & Markum, 1979: 20). During 1973 as well, Dom Paulo distributed 150,000 copies of the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," a United Nations document to which Brazil had been a signatory. By 1979, then in its fourth printing, the number of pamphlets circulated throughout the Archdiocese had reached 1 million (Arns, 1979: 36).

Beginning in the mid-1970's, Cardinal Arns also oversaw the creation of various Archdiocesan councils and commissions with specialized human rights-related mandates. Among the most important of those established were the Archdiocesan Commission of the Pastoral of Human Rights and

the Marginalized, and the Justice and Peace Commission. This latter body in particular has been intensely involved with the publication of human rights material for popular consumption, in pointing out specific violations of basic freedoms, and in providing legal assistance for those who require it (Arns, 1979: 36).

Concrete examples of the role which the Church in conjunction with all such bodies has played in promoting social justice are abundant. As early as 1975 for example, the Justice and Peace Commission released a scathing report on the reality of economic and racial inequality in a book entitled São Paulo: Crescimento e Pobreza (São Paulo: Growth and Poverty) (PCJP, 1978). This was followed in 1978 by the publication of the Human Rights Pastoral Commission's "Repressão a Igreja do Brasil: reflexão sobre uma situação de opressão, 1968-78," which describes the deteriorating state of Church-military relations in the 1970's (CAPDH, 1981: 118).

On a more active front, in 1980, the Archdiocesan Workers' Pastoral, together with several members of the hierarchy, were instrumental in aiding thousands of striking metalworkers in São Paulo's industrial belt. The metalworkers, who walked off their jobs to press for higher wages, had had their strike declared illegal by state authorities. This resulted in a stand-off between the

strikers and local military officials, who eventually resorted to the use of force in anticipation of disorderly protest (Sanders, 1980: 13-14). Through various pronouncements, homilies, and the publication of open letters signed by Dom Paulo and other bishops (Arns, 1980: 1226), the hierarchy moved quickly to lend moral support to the strikers. On behalf of the Archdiocese, Cardinal Arns proclaimed that:

We give moral support to all those with a just cause; we give moral support so that they [the workers] will feel more unified, and will discuss what is best for their class (Arns, 1980: 1213).

Members of the hierarchy also provided strategic and material help in the form of parish halls and churches which were freely made available for use by the strikers. Working at the grassroots level, the Workers' Pastoral for its part maintained a coordinating function. It helped for example, to arrange meetings between union leaders and to ensure that each of the regional bargaining fronts involved in the strike was accompanied by a representative of the Church (Hummes & Betto, 1980: 723).

Furthermore, during the general elections of 1982, the various pastoral organs of the Archdiocese mobilized to conscientize the electorate with respect to voting procedures and party platforms. To this end, a number of instructional pamphlets were prepared and distributed throughout the São Paulo area. The most important of these was a booklet

entitled Fé e Política (Faith and Politics) (CAPDH, 1981) produced by the Human Rights Pastoral Commission. Without favouring any party in particular, this publication provided a clear and concise political history of Brazil, emphasizing the importance of the people's involvement in the democratic process.

Finally, the Human Rights and other Pastorals were extremely active during the recent popular campaign for the direct presidential vote in Brazil. The immediate objective of this nationwide campaign, which was orchestrated by the country's opposition parties between January and May, 1984, was to force the Congress to pass a bill abolishing the existing electoral college.⁷ In São Paulo, lay and clerical activists circulated petitions, promoted mass attendance at rallies, held debates, and generally kept election talk alive in the Churches and the CEBS (see for example, 'Dom Paulo inaugura', 1984; 'Dom Paulo reitera', 1984; and 'Um sacramento', 1984).

Aside from the creation of various pastoral taskforces, proclamations, and the multitude of individual actions initiated or promoted by Cardinal Arns during his first 15 years as Archbishop of Sao Paulo, two developments in particular stand out as extremely significant. These are related to changes in the way the Archdiocese is run, and both have had positive implications for the implementation of the Church's preferential option for the poor.

The first such development was the establishment of joint pastoral planning after 1975. In that year, the Archdiocese prepared its first 2-year plan for pastoral action in São Paulo. Within the plan, which received input from a broad spectrum of lay and religious sectors within the Church, were defined four basic priority areas. These were: 1) The Pastoral of Human Rights and the Marginalized; 2) The Workers' Pastoral; 3) The Pastoral of the Periphery; and 4) The Comunidades Eclesiais de Base (CEBs). The identification of such priorities served to target and intensify the work of the Church in the social justice area, and thus, in the words of Cardinal Arns (1979: 19):

to awaken Christians and others so that they might articulate, promote, and defend human rights as a response to the requirements of the Gospel in the face of social reality.

Though the four basic priority areas described above have been modified somewhat since their adoption, they have been upheld in both subsequent biennial plans published in 1977 and 1980. Furthermore, though they are not designated as priorities, other programmes, such as the Pastoral of Health and the Pastoral of Minors, have also emerged as a direct result of the joint planning process. All in all, there are currently some 18 pastoral areas in which the Church is involved. Within the Archdiocese as a whole, all such bodies coordinate activities, arrange conferences, and

disseminate information through published texts, bulletins, and pamphlets.

The second significant development in the recent history of the São Paulo Church was the decision taken by Cardinal Arns to divide the Archdiocese into 9 separate Episcopal Regions (see Map III, p. 390). Fully functional by the mid to late 1970's, these Regions were designated as quasi-dioceses, with their own curiae, office personnel, and resident bishops.

One immediate result of this division was the qualitative enhancement of decision-making and command structures in the Archdiocese. On the one hand, lay and clerical input from the parishes was now channeled through the various Regional offices, and thus lent a certain degree of additional weight. On the other hand, directives from the central curia were now implemented by an intermediary bureaucracy, which had the power to modify or enhance their impact in accordance with local needs or desires.

The creation of separate Regions, and the appointment of auxiliary bishops to run them, has also contributed to the moral 'presence' of the Church in São Paulo. Instead of just one Archbishop proclaiming the cause of the poor and oppressed, nine voices were added to the chorus, each representing a clearly definable constituency. Over the years, two bishops in particular have become almost legendary crusaders in aid of the lower-classes. The first of these is

Dom Luciano Mendes de Almeida, bishop of Belém Region, who publishes regularly in the local and national press. Dom Luciano is also Secretary-General of the CNBB. The second outspoken bishop is Dom Angélico Sândalo Bernardino of São Miguel Region. A virulent critic of the military, Dom Angélico edits several progressive publications in the Archdiocese, and has personally led numerous protest marches through the street of eastern São Paulo in open defiance of the authorities.

Finally, the territorial division of the Archdiocese undertaken by Cardinal Arns has greatly stimulated has pastoral work of the Church in São Paulo. Each Region for example, maintains its own set of pastoral programmes which are defined and oriented with an eye to resolving local problems. Representatives from the various Regional teams moreover, are active within the pastoral task forces and commissions which operate at the Archdiocesan level, thus contributing to the articulation and execution of more broadly based activities.

In connection with their pastoral programmes, most of the Regions also publish a variety of materials for popular use. Some of this material is destined for local use only, some is exported to other specific Regions, and some is distributed throughout the Archdiocese. The Region of São Miguel for instance, maintains its own publishing facility,

the Centro de Comunicações e Educação Popular (Centre for Communications and Popular Education). This organization produces the Region's monthly newspaper, Grita Povo (Cry of the People), and other books and pamphlets for use in the CEBs and churches. It also publishes material for various popular movements with only informal Church ties. Through the Centre for example, the Movement Against Unemployment in São Miguel prepares and distributes its newsletter, Dê Olho no Desemprego (Eye on Unemployment). In another Region, Osasco, a team of volunteer priests, nuns, and laypersons produce everything from a monthly Boletim Informativo (Informative Bulletin), to a 32 part correspondence course in theology. The team is especially proud of the voluminous material, preaching the Church's preferential option for the poor, which it publishes for use in Regional catechism classes.

Reaction to Innovation in the Archdiocese

In its efforts to carry out its mandate as the voice of the poor and oppressed, the Archdiocese has come under heavy fire from the military and its sympathizers. As often as not, it is Cardinal Arns himself moreover, who has been the target of official ire. He claims to frequently receive 'anonymous' death threats, to which he responds by avoiding casual or unescorted walks, and by constantly altering his daily routine (Arns, 1980: 1221).

As early as 1974, the military had developed a severe dislike for the Cardinal, who many labelled a communist and a communizer. With Dom Paulo specifically in mind, an advisor to then President Ernesto Geisel publicly declared for example, that:

The clergy today constitutes the most active enemy against national security, promoting through purely subversive methods, the substitution of the existing political, social and economic structure of Brazil with a new model, in every aspect consonant with Marxist philosophy ('A Brazilian Cardinal', 1980).

Such criticisms originating in high office have been frequently reiterated over the years. Most recently, in the midst of the 1980 metalworkers' strikes, President João Figueiredo informed the nation that Cardinal Arns had illegally been inciting hostility between management and labour. In a further attempt to isolate and intimidate Dom Paulo, Figueiredo claimed that he had received many letters and phone calls from various priests and bishops who expressed disapproval of the Cardinal's support for the strikes ('O Presidente', 1980).

The abuse Cardinal Arns has personally suffered at the hands of the military is however, relatively minor when compared with the repression which befell the Archdiocese as a whole. As reported earlier, up until 1978 hundreds of religious and lay personnel were arrested for their involvement in human rights-related work. Many of these were also subjected to torture. The media outlets of the

Archdiocese as well fell prey to intense government monitoring. In 1973 in fact, the Archdiocesan radio station Nove de Julho was taken off the air by federal communications authorities in response to Dom Paulo's human rights campaign. The Church was thus deprived of one of its most potent weapons in its battle with the regime. The weekly newspaper of the Archdiocese, O São Paulo, was allowed to continue publishing during the early 1970's, but only under strict censorship. This situation persisted moreover, long after the government censors had visited and left the editorial rooms of most other city newspapers (Bittencourt & Markum, 1979: 9).

In addition to the official repression, which has abated somewhat in recent times, a good deal of hostility has also been directed toward the Church by the local press. According to a recent Church study, a number of Archdiocesan commissions and pastoral task-forces have come under regular attack over the years. These include the Commission for Justice and Peace, the Workers' Pastoral, the Pastoral of Human Rights, and the Pastoral of Minors ('A Igreja', 1984).

One newspaper in particular, O Estado de São Paulo, has been most vociferous and persistent in its criticism of the Church in São Paulo. Early in 1984, it ran a six-part series on the Archdiocese entitled "Igreja, S.A." (Church, Inc.). In literally dozens of articles, under such headings

as "The great real-estate holdings of the 'Church of the poor'," and "The 'Church of the poor' is not that poor," the paper exposed the Church's huge property holdings, its business investments, run-for-profit cemeteries, and middle-class private schools. Quite clearly, the objective of the series was to expose what the newspaper saw as the hypocrisy of the local Church's preferential option for the lower-classes (O Estado de São Paulo, 1984).

The Preferential Option for the Poor and the CEBs
in the Archdiocese

In spite of its unrelenting character, hostility directed towards the Archdiocese and other sources has tended to strengthen rather than weaken the resolve of the hierarchy to aid the poor and oppressed. Of all the actions undertaken within the Archdiocese, this resolve is perhaps no more clearly expressed than through the promotion of the comunidades eclesiais de base (CEBs) in São Paulo. Under the auspices of the Church, this phenomenon has in recent years been growing by leaps and bounds, especially in the lower-class areas of the city.

The CEBs in fact, have long been a priority in the Archdiocese. Even before the formulation of the first Biennial Pastoral Plan, Cardinal Arns made known his commitment to the groups when in 1973, he sold the episcopal palace to liberate funds for the construction of CEB

community centres on the periphery. Since this time, the Curia has invested a considerable portion of of its manpower and resources in promoting the CEBs, whose progress has been faithfully chronicled by the Archdiocesan press.⁸

In official Church documents, the attention given the CEBs has been justified for the following reasons. Firstly, in the face of a rather inappropriate urban parish system, the CEBs are seen as enhancing the presence of the Church in the community. Secondly, they are interpreted as stimulating a distinct form of the human fellowship for which the universal Church stands. Thirdly, the groups are seen as a concrete expression of the Church's 'preferential option for the poor'; and finally, they are envisioned as offering opportunities for the realization of both traditional and innovative Church goals, such as evangelization, sharing, the development of the human person, and ultimately, the transformation of both ecclesial and sociopolitical structures (3^o Plano bienal, 1981: 34-5).

Among the hierarchy, there would appear to be a great deal of agreement with regard to the importance of the CEBs, and with the rationale behind their promotion. Within each of the 9 Episcopal Regions of the Archdiocese for example, the groups have been designated as a top priority area. As regards the CEBs' essential nature and thrust however, there would appear to be a certain amount of disagreement within

the Church. In the following sections, we shall attempt to explore prevailing differences of opinion among Archdiocesan religious personnel with respect to the CEBs, in light of quasi-official views of the groups as provided by Cardinal Archbishop Arns.

Cardinal Arns' Interpretation of the CEBs

Cardinal Arns defines the CEBs as "a way to be the Church of Jesus, born of the experience of captivity, and the wish of the oppressed Latin American people for liberation," (Arns, 1984). The term CEB itself moreover, in Dom Paulo's view, provides a succinct clue as to the groups' constitutive elements. The groups are communities, he claims, because they are made up of people who live in close proximity and who face similar social problems. They are ecclesial because their members share the same Catholic faith; and they are basic since CEB participants are normally recruited from the lower or working-classes.

The CEBs are thus a predominantly people-rooted and oriented phenomenon. As a direct consequence of their essential character states the Cardinal, they possess a unique religious and social thrust. Within the religious sphere, the CEBs have restored the historic role of the lay people in the governance of the Church, and are helping to renew and rebuild outmoded institutional structures such as the parish. "The path of the CEBs has brought forth,"

asserts Cardinal Arns (1984):

without a shadow of a doubt, a breeze of evangelical renovation within the Church as an institution. It gives back to the people their role within the Church, reformulates the services and ministries, and co-operativizes the coordination of pastoral decisions.

The enhanced involvement of the laity facilitated by the CEBs is however, only one part of the story, as the groups are also envisioned as contributing to the amelioration of extant social conditions:

The life of the base communities expresses itself above all in the call to service, be it in relation to the internal necessities of the actual community (diversified ministries) or be it in relation to the concrete world in which they live and have been placed (as quoted in Santayana, 1983: 31).

The CEBs in fact, claims Dom Paulo, have played an integral role in awakening the poor and downtrodden to the necessity of organized action. The groups, he states:

have made possible increased critical consciousness in the face of reality, and have motivated new forms of organization, greatly contributing to the betterment of living conditions, especially for the population of the periphery, which through them have felt motivated to fight for their rights (Arns, 1984).

This liberating function, in favour of the poor, is in reality:

the heart of the CEBs, seeing that in it, they identify themselves with the purpose of Christ who came to evangelize the poor and who affirmed that the Kingdom of Heaven was theirs. In the CEBs, there is no opposition between faith and politics, because there was also no division in the practice or teaching of Jesus (Arns, 1984).

In discussing the CEBs' societal role, Dom Paulo is careful to point out that the groups do not seek to involve themselves directly in explicitly political matters, or in assuming control of specific social programmes. Rather, they seek to press for basic reforms in a more fundamental sense:

The fight for health care, education, transit, etc., in which our base communities participate and which animates them, is directed much more to obtain these services than to manage them...Our people do not aspire to involve themselves in the management of their quality of life. What it possesses are pressing concrete necessities. Its preoccupation doesn't focus upon direct democracy, but with democracy simply in the sharing of natural riches between all in the most egalitarian form possible (Arns, 1983: 1132).

The actual mechanics of political change, states the Cardinal, are best left to those organizations which are explicitly designed to operate within the world of politics:

To the extent that in the base communities there are conditions created for...consciousness to grow, they end up politically involved, stemming from the solidarity expressed with the difficulties of the people from which these communities are born. But the political solutions, the strategies of political action, of syndical action, are elaborated in non-ecclesial instances, with the unions, the political parties, and the various organizations of the popular movement (Arns, 1983: 1131).

The CEBs are not thus in and of themselves a political movement. Instead, "they stimulate reflection and the social engagement of their members, and consequently this helps them to contribute to the development of popular organizations," (Arns, 1983: 1131).

Another aspect of the groups repeatedly stressed by Cardinal Arns concerns their ecclesial character; or in other words, the quality of their ties to the institutional Church. Though the Cardinal admits for example, that the CEBs are "born of the wish of the oppressed...for liberation," he carefully adds that this "experience drinks from the fountain of a new conception of the Church as dictated by Vatican II," (Arns, 1984). They do not exist outside of the Church; nor are they simply subordinated to it. Instead, Dom Paulo insists that the CEBs "are the Church," (Arns, 1983: 1131), and exhorts them to stand "always united with their priests and bishops," (as quoted in Santayana, 1983: 32). The hierarchy moreover, plays a special role in actively encouraging the liberation process in the groups. "We have a great hope," says Cardinal Arns:

that in the poorest areas, the peripheries of the cities, that the CEBs will be a new path through which the most humble discover that the Word was made for them as well; [and that] the poor are evangelized and [will] spontaneously carry out the social requirements of the message (as quoted in Santayana, 1983: 31).

"We seek to aid our people," the Cardinal further states,

to clarify their understanding of social-political-ideological and their personal reality, and to perceive the deafening violence that is camouflaged by propaganda, the mass media, and institutions (Arns, 1984).

In spite of official encouragement however, some difficulties have emerged which can and do inhibit the development of the CEBs, according to Dom Paulo. There

exists for example, "a lack of pastoral agents prepared to help the people organize into communities and to form local leadership structures," (Arns, 1984). In addition, there reportedly remains a certain amount of resistance among ordinary Catholics to what is regarded by some as the Church's overly political posture. This particular problem has been partly brought about by what Cardinal Arns sees as the pervasive ideology of the dominant class which restricts the collective adoption of new, innovative ways of thinking among the lower-classes. One final difficulty which Dom Paulo mentions is purely financial and is related to the lack of Church funding available for the construction of CEB community centres, administrative functions, and local activities (Arns, 1984).

The CEBs and the Local Episcopate

Given the Cardinal's pre-eminent position, one might expect a good deal of conformity between his views on the CEBs, and those of his auxiliary bishops. Interviews conducted with this latter group demonstrate that with but few exceptions, such conformity does indeed exist.

The bishops of the 9 Episcopal Regions all agree for example with the Cardinal's characterization of the groups' essential nature. According to one, the CEBs are "a live nucleus of the Church," (Int. IS-1, 2/16/84), while others

preferred to describe the CEBs as "a new expression of the Church," (Int. OS-1, 2/9/84), or as the "most sincere way to be Church," (Int. ST-1, 2/1/84).

All 9 bishops concur moreover, with Dom Paulo's view of the nature and mechanics of the CEBs' religious and societal roles. Within the religious sphere, the groups were typically interpreted as representing "a manner in which the layperson assumes his mission within the Church," (Int. IS-1, 2/16/84), or as "transforming and purifying" the structure of the institution (Int. SM-1, 3/2/84). Common descriptions of the CEBs' societal thrust related that the groups "induce a process of communication of values, even to those without faith," (Int. BE-1, 3/10/84), "bring solidarity, fraternity, a change in social structure, equality," (Int. SE-1, 2/8/84), "represent the force of the organized masses," (Int. IP-1, 2/7/84), and "create a critical consciousness [among the people and] offer militants to labour unions and political parties," (Int. SM-1, 3/2/84).

With respect to the groups' ecclesial ties however, a certain measure of disagreement among the episcopate becomes evident. Outwardly at least, the bishops express concerns identical to Cardinal Arns, that the groups should be thought of as a strictly ecclesial phenomenon, born within the Church and subject to the authority of the hierarchy. As the bishops clearly state in a recent joint publication:

The CEB is not an exogenous nucleus which seeks to incorporate itself into the ecclesial body. It is not a contestory vanguard, in conflict with the hierarchical structure. It is not a political group in search of easy cover or desirous of using the Church. The CEB in Brazil is the Church ('A Palavra de Deus', 1984).

During individual interviews however, substantial fluctuations between bishops in the level of concern expressed for Church-CEB solidarity became apparent. Some of the bishops (4) did not appear overly concerned with the quality of the CEBs' Church links, arguing that the people themselves adamantly insist upon a hierarchical presence within the groups. By contrast, 5 of the bishops did emphasize the importance of such links in a much more direct and forceful manner. The general feeling among these 5 is perhaps best expressed in the following comment made by Dom Alfredo Novak of Lapa Region:

The ecclesial component [of the groups] is very important. What we are defending here is a tripartite notion of the CEBs...The CEB is a communion between the priest, the people and the bishop (Int. LA-1, 1/31/84).

The principal fear of those bishops adhering to such a view was that without constant hierarchical vigilance, the CEBs might fall prey to manipulation by secular forces, and thus move away from the Church. This fear was not apparently shared by Cardinal Arns, nor was it mentioned by the other 4 bishops. One of the latter stated in fact, that "people who think that the groups are manipulated have a poor idea of what is happening [in the CEBs]; they have a static vision of

society," (Int. IP-1, 2/7/84). For the 5 bishops concerned with ecclesial control however, the threat of CEB instrumentalization from both the right and left of the political spectrum is a clear and present danger, as the following comments demonstrate:

It [manipulation] is an element which must be taken up by the fathers of the spirit; people have to discuss the possibility (Int. BE-1, 3/10/84).

We know the people who like to do this [i.e. instrumentalize the CEBs]. Sometimes we have to speak to them, and to the groups, but it is difficult (Int. IS-1, 2/16/84).

The groups are subject to manipulation from the right and left. The people often can't tell the difference...Attacks on supermarkets, bus burnings and so forth, are all the result of manipulation (Int. SA-1, 2/2/84).

Those organizations most interested in using the CEBs for their own purposes, claimed the bishop of Santana, Dom Joel Capatan, are the ideologues of the military regime, the Workers' Party, and revolutionary groups such as the PCB (Brazilian Communist Party) and the Marxist guerilla cell known as MR-8 (Int. ST-1, 2/1/84).

One further area of divergence between the bishops' and Cardinal Arns' view of the CEBs concerns their evaluations of the difficulties which face the Church with respect to CEB promotion. While all agreed upon the necessity of group stimulation, specific problems of religious traditionalism, the ideological hegemony of the dominant classes, and CEB financing, as mentioned by Cardinal

Arns, were barely touched upon. Four of the 9 bishops did mention problems associated with the lack and unpreparedness of pastoral agents working in the field, which was also one of the Cardinal's prime concerns. The bishop of Itapeçerica da Serra Region for instance, complained that he had just 30 priests and 60 nuns involved in CEB promotion, in an area possessing about 1 million inhabitants (Int. IS-1, 2/1/84). The lack of preparedness on the part of religious and lay leaders was also mentioned by the bishops of Santana and Belém Regions. Dom Luciano Mendes de Almeida, bishop of Belém, was most concerned about the possible misuse of power by those assigned to guide the CEBs. Often, he claimed, "leaders have power which they use for non-evangelical purposes, directing it instead towards self-promotion and competitiveness," (Int. BE-1, 3/10/84). The bishop of Lapa Region similarly expressed concern that a less than fully prepared leadership would greatly enhance the threat of subversion within the groups. "It is absolutely necessary," he stated:

to give attention to the formation of leaders, educators of the faith and responsible Christians...so that the CEBs won't be led astray by purely lay or ideologically radicalized organizations ('CEBs-Comunidades de Vida', 1984).

For the most part however, the bishops focused their attention upon much more mundane factors impeding the CEBs' progress than those cited by Cardinal Arns. Such an emphasis

apparently stems from the fact that they work much more closely within the groups than the Archbishop.

Some of the bishops mentioned certain difficulties associated with the urban environment. Those from Santana (Int. ST-1, 2/1/84), Ipiranga (IP-1, 2/7/84), and SÉ Regions (Int. SE-1, 2/8/84) in particular emphasized the fact that CEB formation in affluent areas was almost impossible due to the self-sufficiency of the middle-classes. The situation among the urban poor was no better, these same bishops stated, since the high rates of mobility among slum-dwellers renders sustained contact with and among them impossible.

At least 3 more bishops from predominantly peripheral Regions mentioned certain practical difficulties affecting the receptivity of the CEBs among the suburban poor. Physical exhaustion for example, was claimed as one such problem by the bishop of São Miguel, Dom Angélico Sândalo Bernardino. "The people," he related, "are in a continual fight for survival, afflicted by underdevelopment, illiteracy, illness, and unemployment." Often therefore, they have neither the time nor the inclination to expend energy in CEB-related activities (Int. SM-1, 3/2/84). The bishops of Santana and Santo Amaro also cited the effect of the rising tide of violence in São Paulo. Criminal activity, they claimed, was keeping many people from attending usually nocturnal CEB meetings, since few dared to venture out into

the poorly lit streets of peripheral neighbourhoods for fear of being assaulted (Ints. ST-1, 2/1/84: SA-1, 2/2/84).

To summarize briefly, it would appear that for the most part the bishops share Cardinal Arns' interpretation of the CEBs. Where differences of opinion do exist within the Regional episcopate, these would seem to complement, rather than contradict official viewpoints. Though for example, some bishops may feel more, and others less concerned with ecclesial control than Dom Paulo, and while most cite a number of obstacles to CEB promotion in addition to those mentioned by the Cardinal, such opinions in no way imply a rejection of official pronouncements. Rather, they represent merely expansions or qualifications of established positions.

The CEBs and Other Religious Personnel

As yet, there have been no studies conducted which deal specifically with the attitudes of the Archdiocesan clergy or other religious personnel towards the CEB phenomenon. Using data collected from interviews conducted during the course of our research, we shall attempt however to provide some idea of how the rank and file perceive the groups. Though our sample is rather small, consisting of just 19 priests and 3 nuns, statistically it is not highly unrepresentative of the wider body from which it was drawn.⁹ The opinions expressed therefore, should be fairly typical of those found within the larger body as well.

Where the CEBs are concerned, there would appear to be certain basic divisions within the sample which are at least slightly more pronounced than among the local episcopate. Differences of opinion among lower ranking religious personnel seem moreover, to follow a distinct pattern. Specifically, our interview data show that those priests and nuns who work among the poor hold opinions generally uncritical of Cardinal Arns, which are remarkably similar to those expressed by the Regional episcopate. By contrast, those active in more affluent urban areas are somewhat more likely to challenge official views.

In order to clearly demonstrate the major points of consensus and discord within the lower ranks generally, we shall divide our sample into two sub-groups, and then compare the attitudes and beliefs prevalent within each. The first sub-group will consist of all those individuals attached to middle and upper class parishes (n = 10). The second will include all those located in lower-class parishes on the periphery of São Paulo (n = 10).

First of all, with respect to Cardinal Arns' nominal definition of the CEBs as "a way to be Church," there would seem to be a good deal of unanimity within and between group-types. Not one priest or nun from any location offered a serious challenge to the Cardinal's position. With regard to Dom Paulo's assertion that the groups are essentially a

TABLE 2.1

MAJOR AREAS OF DISCORD BETWEEN CARDINAL ARNS AND THE
ARCHDIOCESAN HIERARCHY

Areas of discord	Hierarchical Rank		
	Bishops (n = 9)	Sample priests and nuns	
		Urban-based (n = 10)	periphery-based (n = 10)
Disagreement with definition of CEBs as a "way to be Church"	0	0	0
Disagreement with predominantly lower-class character of CEBs	0	2	0
Disagreement with CEBs' role within the Church	0	0	0
Disagreement with CEBs' role within society	0	5	0
Disagreement with the role of the hierarchy in stimulating CEB formation	0	0	2
Concern expressed for close ecclesial supervision:			
i) greater than that expressed by Arns	5	0	4
ii) less than that expressed by Arns	4	0	2
iii) about the same as that expressed by Arns	0	10	4
Expressed fear of CEB manipulation by:			
i) secular forces	5	0	4
ii) internal sources	0	6	0
Other than officially cited difficulties in CEB promotion cited	8	8	7

lower-class phenomenon, some measure of disagreement was however apparent. While virtually all of the religious personnel from peripheral areas upheld this belief, as did the bishops, 2 of the 10 urban-based priests and nuns vociferously attacked it. The comunidades eclesiais de base, in their view, are just as appropriate for the materially well-off, as they are for the poor. One priest claimed in fact to have over 12 fully operational CEBs within the boundaries of his parish, which he added is one of the most affluent in São Paulo (Int. SE-4, 2/21/84).

Concerning the role of the CEBs within the institutional Church, wide consensus was again evident between and within group types, with all priests and nuns in the sample expressing hope for the birth of a renewed form of Roman Catholicism. Unlike the bishops and periphery-based religious personnel though, a substantial portion of clerics and nuns who work among the middle and upper-classes were less than comfortable with Cardinal Arns' views on the CEBs' societal role. Five of the 10 stated that actions to promote political change should be undertaken by the CEBs as an option only, and should in no way be seen as a categorical imperative. In their view, there is little need for the groups to move beyond religious or purely social ends, such as the promotion of a communal and fraternal spirit among the people. "The CEBs," stated one priest for example, "are a praxis, but one which does not necessarily have to possess a

political element," (Int. SE-2, 1/26/84). Another priest claimed that the political involvement of most groups is at any rate transitory, and that the CEB as a politically oriented phenomenon will likely not endure:

The CEBs are just a second in the history of the Church. In 20 years, everything will change. Just compare [what is happening in the Church] today for example, with 20 years ago (Int. SA-3, 3/13/84).

The necessity of strong ecclesial ties was one further area of agreement among all types of priests and nuns. For the vast majority of religious personnel in the sample, the CEBs are in fact not properly constituted in the absence of Church representatives. Only 2 of the 10 periphery-based clerics and nuns were of the view that the presence of a pastoral agent was not always necessary.

About half of the periphery-based personnel expressed views similar to those of some bishops, that clerical supervision is required to ward off the threat of CEB manipulation emanating from secular sources. Among the 4 stating such concerns, left-wing political groups were most frequently mentioned as the perpetrators of ecclesial subversion. The CEBs, stated one priest, were in fact "easily manipulated by the left, people without faith." "They speak badly of the Church," he added, "but they use it," (Int. SA-2, 2/11/84). A nun who had been working with favelados was more specific about the perpetrators of manipulation, pointing the finger at one group in particular.

"One time," she related:

we tried to organize a favela, and soon after our arrival, some people from the PC do B [Communist Party of Brazil] showed up. Fortunately the people rejected them, and they did not meet their objectives (Int. 3-5:1, 5/7/84).

Just half of the urban-based personnel (6 of 10) as well saw manipulation of the groups for political ends as an ever-present possibility. Rather ironically however, they tended to interpret such action as an internal rather than external problem. Nearly all in fact saw the accompanying pastoral agent per se as the most potent threat to the CEBs' ecclesial character. One priest for example, while admitting that "almost all of the groups are instrumentalized by the right and left," saw clerical manipulation as a much more clear and present danger (Int. SM-7, 2/14/84). Another stated similarly that "the priest has a very dominant role," adding that although "he doesn't exercise control directly...his presence is very strong," (Int. 1-3:1, 4/23/84). Still others referred in passing to their counterparts on the periphery in less diplomatic terms, calling them "red priests," and "ideological zealots."

Finally, few differences were seen in the attitudes of urban and periphery-based personnel towards the difficulties of CEB promotion. In this case, members of both group-types cited problems extremely similar to those mentioned by the Archdiocesan episcopate. Eight of the 10

urban-based priests for example, discussed problems of CEB stimulation within urban, high density areas. Based upon their previous experience in other less affluent parts of the Archdiocese, 2 of these did also mention one difficulty not cited by either Cardinal Arns or his auxiliary bishops. Specifically, they commented on what they believed to be the unpreparedness of the people generally to receive the message of the CEBs. "The CEBs," one of these individuals claimed:

are beautiful in theory, but in practice, they are something else again. The people are not really ready. They don't understand very well what a CEB is (Int. SM-6, 3/15/84).

Seven of the 10 priests and nuns working on the periphery dwelt upon problems of crime, hunger, and physical exhaustion, all of which had also been mentioned by the bishops. Only 3 of the 10 specified difficulties associated with religious traditionalism, and with the pervasivity of the dominant ideology, as had Cardinal Arns. Just 1 moreover, cited problems created by the lack or unpreparedness of the clergy.

Where this last difficulty was mentioned, periphery-based personnel tended to name the bishops rather than the members of their own rank as obstacles to CEB promotion. Two of the 3 priests who had concerned themselves with the problem assailed the bishop's lack of enthusiasm for the CEBs in their Regions. As one tactfully related:

The bishop of this Region is fairly new and hasn't yet learned the area. He appears rather

conservative, but he doesn't hold back. Then again he doesn't push ahead either (Int. SA-5, 1/23/84).

Somewhat surprisingly, the remaining cleric criticized the local bishop for being over-zealous. By "pushing and forcing" the groups, he claimed, the bishop was stifling their growth (Int. SM-6, 3/27/84).

To conclude, it would appear that Cardinal Arns' vision of the CEBs had found a good deal of acceptance among both the bishops and lower ranking religious personnel working on the periphery. This in turn is extremely important for the implementation of a pro-CEB policy within the Archdiocese, in those areas at least where the poor are concentrated. By contrast, priests and nuns located in more affluent areas are much more likely to reject the Cardinal's interpretation of the groups. Their major point of objection, perhaps reflecting the comfortable middle-class milieu in which such personnel are situated, is that the CEBs are conceived in terms too explicitly political. This finding seems to suggest that in certain urban parishes, CEB-related directives emanating from the upper hierarchy may be undergoing considerable revision prior to their implementation.¹⁰

The CEB Phenomenon in the Archdiocese of São Paulo:
Some Preliminary Observations

The purpose of this Chapter was to provide a general overview of the physical setting and the structure of the Roman Catholic Church in São Paulo. We examined moreover, Archdiocesan policies with respect to the CEBs, and attempted to measure extant levels of conformity among the local hierarchy to quasi-official interpretations of the groups.

Aside from providing background information however, some of the data examined also present us with a preliminary opportunity for testing our basic research hypotheses, as stated at the close of Chapter I. Hypothesis one, it will be recalled, states that the CEBs are universally oriented towards liberation as a function of their origins among the poor and oppressed. The views expressed by a substantial proportion of urban-based priests and nuns with regard to the groups tends to weaken the validity of such an assertion. The experience of such urban-based personnel has apparently convinced them that the groups are neither exclusively lower-class, nor need they in any sense become politically engaged.

It is hypothesis three perhaps, i.e. that the CEBs maintain a unique relationship with the institutional Church, which is most seriously threatened by the data. As evidenced by both Archdiocesan policy toward the CEBs, and the attitudes prevalent among the hierarchy, the CEBs are quite

clearly a part of existing Church structures. In the eyes of the Church moreover, there is no question that the CEBs are subject to the authority of the hierarchy, which in turn actively promotes the development of the phenomenon in accordance with established guidelines.

While somewhat revealing, the data presented thus far nevertheless only provide an initial clue as to the invalidity of the hypotheses, and consequently to the superiority of the institutional over the grassroots theoretical approach to the CEBs. The true extent to which the groups conform to either of these views can only be discovered through a more thorough testing of the hypotheses, which in turn will require a detailed examination of CEB structure and activities. It is just such an examination which we shall now undertake, beginning in Chapter III with a statistical overview of various aspects of the CEB phenomenon in São Paulo.

NOTES

¹The monthly minimum salary in June, 1984 was equal to 97,000 cruzeiros or about 65 dollars (Canadian).

²The name given to natives of the city of São Paulo.

³If calculations from the metropolitan region's own statistical agency, Emplasa (1982: 391) are used, the picture is even bleaker: 35 percent of homes have no running water, and 71 percent have no drains.

⁴Between 1970 and 1980, the Brazilian economy grew by some 5 to 10 percent annually. Since 1981 however, it has been shrinking. The growth rate for 1981 was -1.6%; for 1982, 0.9%; and for 1983, -3.2% (IBGE figures quoted in 'PIB foi positivo', 1984).

⁵Official estimates, determined by the IBGE, put unemployment in region at 7 to 8 percent of the workforce. A recent study done by Seade (São Paulo state's statistical body), and Dieese (a fact-finding body connected with the labour unions), shows however the actual unemployment rate to be close to 15 percent ('Pesquisa', 1984).

⁶This includes the sub-municipal districts of Guaianazes, Itaquera, São Miguel Paulista, and Itaim Paulista (Emplasa, 1982: 395).

⁷Since 1964, Brazilian presidents have been selected by an electoral college consisting of all federal legislators and some representatives from the state assemblies. Because of the large number of political appointees, and the government party's strength in the populous rural Northeast of Brazil, the college has traditionally been stacked in favour of military candidates, who in any case, have customarily run unopposed.

⁸The weekly newspaper O São Paulo, consistently provides space for CEB-related news. During the first quarter of 1984 for example, it published articles concerning the CEBs and the housing problem ('Famílias ameaçadas', 1984), the CEBs' involvement with unemployment and women's issues ('No Embu', 1984), health care ('Movimento de Saude', 1984), transportation ('Vila Cardoso Franco', 1984), and flooding ('Na zona leste', 1984).

⁹This is true at least if the sample is compared to Archdiocesan pastors as a group. The sample is for example, roughly split between priests and nuns from peripheral areas, and those working in middle-class districts, mirroring the proportion of urban to periphery-located pastors within the Archdiocese. A slightly higher percentage of the sample group (55%) were born outside Brazil than were pastors (44%). The mean age of the sample, at 44, was also slightly lower than that for pastors, at 52.

¹⁰Such an assertion is entirely in keeping with the results of a recent study of Archdiocesan pastors which showed that priests and nuns in middle-class areas were somewhat more likely to reject the 'progressive' intrusions of the upper hierarchy than were periphery-based personnel (Baraglia, 1983).

**CHAPTER THREE: A STATISTICAL PORTRAIT OF CEB STRUCTURE
AND ORIENTATION IN SÃO PAULO**

CEB Distribution and Growth in the Archdiocese

According to the 1983 Guia Geral published by the central curia, there are approximately 765 CEBs in the Archdiocese of São Paulo. This number represents a 52 percent increase over the total reported in 1980. Generally speaking, about 90 percent of currently existing groups are located on the periphery of São Paulo, where the lower-classes predominate. The remaining 10 percent are found closer to the city's urban core, in the middle and upper class areas.

Table 3.1 provides a slightly more detailed portrait of CEB growth and distribution in the 9 Episcopal Regions of the Archdiocese. In the table are listed the number of CEBs existing in each Region in 1983, the CEB growth rate for the previous 3 year period, and a socioeconomic rank score. The values for the first two variables were obtained using the 1980 and 1983 editions of the Archdiocesan Guia Geral. Socioeconomic rank was derived following a somewhat more complex procedure. The score which appears in the table represents the statistical average of values assigned to sub-

Regional ecclesiastical units known as 'sectors'. Each of these sectors had been given a numerical rank ranging from 1 (urban-affluent) to 8 (periphery-poor) in accordance with a homogeneous-area mapping scheme for São Paulo devised by the state government (GESP, 1977). A low score consequently, signifies that the Region is predominantly urban and relatively affluent, while a high score indicates that the Region is located for the most part on the periphery and that its residents are primarily low-income earners.

TABLE 3.1
CEB DISTRIBUTION AND GROWTH IN THE EPISCOPAL REGIONS
OF SÃO PAULO

Episcopal Region	Number of CEBs, 1983	CEB growth rate, 1980-1983 (%)	Socioeco- status
Sé	12	0	2.3
Ipiranga	17	13	4.5
Santana	56	51	5.6
Belém	71	N.A.	6.3
Lapa	82	46	6.5
Santo Amaro	52	-16	6.8
Itapecerica da Serra	164	64	7.0
São Miguel	120	69	7.3
Osasco	191	65	7.5

As the table indicates, the CEBs' numerical strength and rate of growth vary widely from Region to Region. The variance in the first two variables however, does appear to be closely tied to that of the third, socioeconomic status. Roughly speaking, the lower the socioeconomic rank of the Region, the more likely it is to possess a strong and dynamic CEB presence. Only Santo Amaro Region does not fit the general pattern, for reasons to be discussed in detail in Chapter IV.

The affluence of the area concerned is thus an obvious and ostensibly powerful predictor of CEB emergence and growth in São Paulo. If we now move from the Regional to the sub-Regional analytical level however, it may be shown that certain other, personnel-related factors as well are not without influence.

In Table 3.2 are presented Pearson Correlation scores between a select number of variables which were constructed using data from each of the 48 sub-Regional sectors in the Archdiocese. The two 'dependent' variables, i.e. number, and growth rate of CEBs, were calculated as previously described, as was the first predictor, socioeconomic status. The two personnel-related predictors, i.e. mean age, and nationality of pastors, were derived from Archdiocesan employment records and the Anuário Católico do Brasil published by CERIS (1977).

The interpretation of the scores in the table, it should be cautioned, is limited for two basic reasons. First

of all, we were able to obtain background information on Archdiocesan pastors only. Though these are the most important religious personnel working with the CEBs (in terms of rank), they are not the only personnel involved with the groups. Secondly, the data is analyzed in aggregate form at the sectoral level. Consequently,, this imposes limitations on what can actually be said about relationships between variables at the parish or CEB level. Given such restrictions, the data do still however, provide significant insight into patterns of CEB development as we shall see.

TABLE 3.2

FACTORS AFFECTING SECTORAL CEB DISTRIBUTION AND GROWTH

(Pearson Correlations)

Dependent variables	% of Brazilian pastors	Mean age of pastors	Socioeconomic status
A. Number of CEBs, 1983	-.242	-.377	.613
B. CEB growth rate, 1980 - 1983	-.139	-.365	.267
(Socioeconomic status)	-.327	-.623	

Looking first at row A, we see presented correlations between the three predictors and the number of CEBs in each sector. Not surprisingly, it is the socioeconomic rank score which is most closely related to the dependent variable. The

correlation of .613 indicates that as the rank of the sector becomes lower, the more likely a sector is to have a large number of CEBs.

The next most important variable here is pastors' age, with a correlation of $-.377$, showing that to some extent, there tend to be more CEBs in those sectors where younger personnel are posted. Such a finding is entirely consistent with the fact that such priests would likely have been ordained during or following the Second Vatican Council, and thus would be more inclined than their older colleagues to promote innovative lay groups such as the CEBs.

The proportion of Brazilian-born pastors is the least important determinant, with a correlation of just $-.242$. This indicates that there is some proclivity, albeit slight, for the CEBs to be located where foreign priests predominate within a sector.

Before proceeding, it is important to observe from the table the rather high correlation between sectoral socioeconomic status and pastors' age ($r = .623$). Such a result leads one to question the absolute superiority of the first variable in predicting CEB distribution. Specifically, what the correlation indicates is that younger priests are much more likely to be working in lower-class areas than in urban affluent ones. While one may convincingly argue that the younger pastors are simply attracted to poorer areas because this is where the CEBs are emerging, another

possibility does present itself; i.e. that the strong presence of the CEBs in lower-class sectors is attributable to the numerical strength of younger, more progressive priests here, rather than to the inherent characteristics of the sector itself. The fact that the Church itself maintains an informal policy of purposely locating younger priests in lower-class neighbourhoods (see for example 'O cotidiano de luta', 1984) would seem to support such a contention.

The case for stressing pastors' age as compared with sectoral socioeconomic status as a factor stimulating the CEB phenomenon, is enhanced somewhat if we look at the relationship between our second dependent variable, CEB growth, and our three predictors. In this case, as the correlation of $-.365$ in row B shows, age itself is the key factor. By contrast, the correlation for socioeconomic status is $.267$, and that for pastors' nationality, just $-.139$. While the CEBs may numerically predominate in poorer sectors of the Archdiocese, what this result indicates is that CEB growth per se does not occur exclusively in such areas. Rather, there is at least some tendency for growth to occur in any and all sectors where younger pastors are present, regardless of sectoral socioeconomic status.

To summarize briefly, the data presented thus far demonstrate that the CEBs tend to be concentrated in the least affluent areas of the Archdiocese, although it was also

shown that their number appears to be growing in rich and poor districts alike. We alluded to the possibility moreover, that extant patterns of CEB distribution and growth in any case may be less related to the socioeconomic status of an area, than to the fact that a certain type of religious personnel (i.e. younger priests) may be present there.

Though our understanding of certain basic aspects of the CEBs consequently, has been enhanced, the foregoing analysis still does not contribute a great deal to our understanding of what the CEBs are and what they do. In the following sections therefore, we shall narrow our focus somewhat, and statistically examine, at much closer range, a select sample of groups.

The CEB Sample

Our CEB sample consists of 22 groups which were located throughout the Archdiocese of São Paulo. In accordance with the general objectives of the dissertation, these were selected from as wide a range of social and geographical settings as possible, utilizing a stratified random sampling plan. This plan was executed in four stages as follows.¹

In the first stage, we narrowed the research frame somewhat by selecting out 3 of the 9 Episcopal Regions into which the Archdiocese is divided. The 3 Regions were carefully chosen so as to express the essential social and

physical characteristics of the area as a whole. The first one selected, Região SÉ, lies at the heart of the Archdiocese, and is strictly urban and predominantly middle-class. The other two Regions, Santo Amaro and São Miguel, are located partly within the urban area of São Paulo, but also take in large portions of the city's southern and eastern peripheries respectively.

Our next step was to assign socioeconomic rank scores to each of the sub-Regional sectors within the 3 Regions, using the homogeneous-area mapping scheme devised by the São Paulo state government. Once accomplished, we randomly selected within each Region, one 'more' and one 'less' affluent sub-Regional unit from among those sectors with the highest and lowest socioeconomic rank scores respectively.

In the third stage, parishes were selected by chance from each of the 6 sectors chosen in the above manner. The pastors of these parishes were also contacted so as to confirm the socioeconomic status rank which had been applied to the area in question.

In the final stage, one or two CEBS were randomly picked from lists provided by the local priest, depending upon the availability of the groups for study. The CEBS that were selected were those that conformed most closely with the definition of the groups posited by Cardinal Arns. First of all, they had to be basic, in the sense at least that they

consist of ordinary lay people. Secondly, the groups chosen had to be ecclesial, or made up of people who considered themselves to be part of the Roman Catholic Church. Thirdly, they had to be communities in some sense, that is, composed of people who lived in the same vicinity and ostensibly possessed certain needs and aspirations in common.

The sample obtained following this procedure was evenly split between middle and lower-class CEBs. Of the 11 poor CEBs, 2 were situated in centrally located urban slum areas, and the remaining 9 on the periphery of São Paulo. The average membership of such groups was 26, and their mean age 6.6 years. The 11 middle-class CEBs were all located in and around São Paulo's urban core, possessed 17 members on average, and had a mean age of 6.2 years.

The one to one ratio of middle to lower-class CEBs in the sample was precisely that required to test our research hypotheses in the manner described in Chapter I; that is, through an examination and comparison of class-based group-types. The data to be used in effecting such an analysis, were collected in various ways. To begin with, information on group structure and goals was gathered in consultation with leading CEB members using a prepared interview schedule. In addition, all group members were asked to complete a detailed questionnaire soliciting information on their personal background, secular and Church-related attitudes, and so forth. The researcher himself finally, spent

considerable time in each CEB gathering first-hand observational data on various group aspects.

CEB Activities and Organizational Structures

In this section, we shall outline the basic activities and organizational structure of the sample lower and middle-class CEBs, and to assess differences and similarities existing between the two group-types. Briefly stated, it will be shown that inter-group-type similarities greatly outweigh the dissimilarities, with but few exceptions. Where variances between CEB-types do occur, these appear to have little to do with intrinsic or class-related qualities of the groups in question.

Before proceeding with our analysis, we should like to introduce some slight terminological changes designed simply to avoid confusion and excess verbiage. While continuing to denominate all sample groups as CEBs, we shall occasionally be referring in the text and tables which follow, to our two group-types in abbreviated form. Synonymous with 'lower-class group' may thus appear the term 'L-CEB', and with 'middle-class group' similarly, 'M-CEB'.

To begin, Table 3.3 summarizes group-type differences both in terms of overall function, and with respect to specific activities. Looking first at group origins, it is apparent that a majority of CEBs of both types were formed for essentially religious reasons; in other words, to serve

TABLE 3.3
 DIFFERENCES IN GROUP FUNCTION AND ACTIVITIES
 BETWEEN CEB-TYPES
 (in numbers of groups)
 (percentage in parentheses)

Functions or activities	All groups (n = 11)	Group-type	
		M-CEBs (n = 11)	L-CEBs (n = 11)
Originally formed for religious purposes	16 (73)	9 (82)	7 (64)
Currently concerned with social or political causes	8 (36)	2 (18)	6 (55) *
Traditional activities:			
Charity work	11 (50)	7 (64)	4 (36)
Bible study	11 (50)	6 (55)	5 (45)
Religious festivals	11 (50)	5 (45)	6 (55)
Innovative activities:			
Local mass or <u>celebrações</u>	12 (55)	4 (36)	8 (73) *
Service preparation	10 (45)	3 (27)	7 (64) *
Preparation of other sacraments	7 (32)	2 (18)	5 (45)
Reflection and discussion	19 (86)	9 (82)	10 (91)
Political consciousness-raising	8 (36)	3 (27)	5 (45)
<u>Revindicações</u>	6 (28)	0 (00)	6 (55) *

* Indicates that differences between group-types are significant at or below the .10 level.

local needs for religious 'services' such as mass and other sacraments, catechism, and so forth. Admittedly, a significantly greater proportion of lower-class CEBs have gone on to become involved with some non-Church-related social or political cause. Note however, that at least 2 of the M-CEBs have also done so, and perhaps more importantly, that fully one-half of the L-CEBs have not. While consequently, there may exist some tendency for the lower-class groups to become involved in secular issues, no necessary or exclusive link exists between the groups and the pursuit of such causes.²

If we look at the specific activities with which the CEBs are regularly engaged moreover, we see only slight differences between group types. In the case of those activities we have designated as being 'traditional' (those which have historically been practiced by Catholic lay groups),³ it is only charity work which is disproportionately undertaken by the M-CEBs. By contrast, an almost equal number of the two group-types are engaged in Bible study and planning religious festivals or holy days.

Where more innovative activities are concerned, i.e. those of a type which have appeared in the wake of Vatican II, somewhat clearer divergencies are apparent between CEB-types. The L-CEBs for example, are somewhat more likely to offer mass or celebrações,⁴ to help the priest, nun, or lay

minister to prepare such services, and to help prepare their members to take certain sacraments, such as baptism. Nevertheless, there is almost no difference between the CEB-types in the extent to which reflection and political consciousness-raising are undertaken. The former activity, it should be pointed out, involves the analysis of some biblical passage as it relates to the everyday life of the members. The latter is oriented much more toward the direct discussion of some pressing social or political issue, and is seen by the Church as a key CEB ingredient, awakening and leading the poor especially to fight for their rights (see Chapter II). It is somewhat surprising therefore, to see that a number of middle-class groups are often engaged in this activity, and that a goodly portion of the L-CEBs are not.

If there is one activity though, which does clearly separate middle-class from poor CEBs, it is the involvement of the latter in neighbourhood improvement projects or revindicações. Just over half of the lower-class CEBs are involved in these projects, through which group members work to secure basic services and infrastructural improvements for their neighbourhoods. The revindicações are however an activity to which the L-CEBs alone are well-suited, since they directly answer the immediate needs of group members for better living standards. The middle-class CEBs by contrast, rarely receive the impetus to engage in similar activity, if

only because the quality of services and infrastructure within their own neighbourhoods is generally of a superior calibre, and thus gives the membership very little to complain about.

Turning now to Table 3.4, we see presented data on the organizational and leadership structure of the two group-types. Both lower and middle-class groups, it will be observed, meet with nearly identical regularity, although there is a markedly greater tendency for the L-CEBs to hold group meetings in their own community centres. M-CEB members by contrast, tend to congregate at the home of a group leader.

TABLE 3.4

DIFFERENCES IN ORGANIZATION AND LEADERSHIP BETWEEN CEB-TYPES
(in numbers of groups)
(percentages in parentheses)

Organization and Leadership characteristics	All groups (n = 22)	Group-type	
		M-CEBs (n = 11)	L-CEBs (n = 11)
Meet at least weekly	9 (41)	5 (45)	4 (36)
Meet in community centres belonging to CEB	10 (45)	3 (27)	7 (64) *
Possess lay ministers within the CEB	7 (32)	3 (27)	4 (36)
Maintain the functional sub-groups	11 (50)	4 (36)	7 (64)
Possess a <u>conselho</u> or directorate	11 (50)	5 (45)	7 (64)

* Indicates that differences between group-types are significant at or below the .10 level.

The fact that the L-CEBs are much more likely to meet in their own halls moreover, is not that surprising, given that the Archdiocese has traditionally encouraged and funded the construction of such centres on the periphery, while making no such provision for middle-class parishoners.

The disproportionate possession of community centres by the lower-class groups also incidently, helps to account for previously noted differences in the frequency with which the two CEB-types participate in certain religious activities. The L-CEBs might be more likely to offer mass or celebrações locally for example, simply because they tend to possess adequate facilities in which to do so. Certainly the presence of lay ministers capable of performing the celebrações or offering certain sacraments has little to do with the inter-group-type distribution of religious services. As the table indicates, roughly equal numbers of middle and lower-class groups are in possession of such personnel.

Table 3.4 demonstrates as well that L-CEBs and M-CEBs do differ slightly with respect to the maintenance of functional sub-groups. These are teams of group members which are responsible for carrying out specific group activities, such as biblical reflection, or the preparation of the mass. The fact that such sub-groups are more likely to be present in the L-CEBs, it should be noted however, is not necessarily related to the importance given group

activities by the membership. Rather, it may simply be attributable to the fact that the lower-class CEBs are generally larger than the M-CEBs, and are thus able to facilitate a much more refined division of labour.

As regards group leadership finally, both CEB-types, as the table shows, are almost equally likely to possess a formal steering body or conselho (council). Those CEBs of either type which do not have such a directorate, tend to be dominated by individual lay or Church-based leaders. Neither group-type consequently, can lay claim to being either inherently or exclusively democratic in any sense.

Moving now to Table 3.5, we wish to discuss similarities and differences between CEB-types in terms of the quality of their ties to the institutional Church. We see first of all from the table that religious personnel were as involved in the initial formation of the L-CEBs as they were in the middle-class groups. The majority of CEBs in both categories then, did not emerge spontaneously or haphazardly, but did so with the help and guidance of accompanying Church representatives, as in fact most empirical studies of the CEB phenomenon in Brazil have shown.⁵

TABLE 3.5
 PRESENCE OF CHURCH PERSONNEL IN THE CEBs
 (in numbers of groups)
 (percentages in parentheses)

Quality of presence	All groups (n = 22)	Group-type	
		M-CEBs (n = 11)	L-CEBs (n = 11)
Priests or nuns involved in group formation	16 (73)	9 (82)	7 (64)
Priests or nuns actively present within the CEB	8 (36)	2 (18)	6 (55) *

*Indicates that differences between group-types are significant at or below the .10 level.

What is perhaps most noteworthy however, is that religious personnel appear to maintain a far more active presence in the lower-class CEBs than in their middle-class counterparts. Of the two CEB categories therefore, the L-CEBs would seem to represent the less purely lay-oriented type.

The strong presence of Church personnel in these groups, we should like to further suggest, has far-reaching implications for the frequency with which certain activities are undertaken by the L-CEBs; activities such as mass and sacrament preparation, and the revindicações, which most clearly distinguish the lower-class groups from the M-CEBs. As Table 3.6 shows, of the 6 L-CEBs which are involved in the

revindicações for example, nearly all are accompanied by priests or nuns.

TABLE 3.6
PRESENCE OF CHURCH PERSONNEL IN L-CEBs UNDERTAKING

REVINDICAÇÕES

(in numbers of groups)
(percentages in parentheses)

Priests or nuns present in group	Involved in <u>revindicações</u>	
	Yes (n = 6)	No (n = 5)
Yes	4 (66)	2 (40)
No	2 (34)	3 (60)

Unfortunately, our statistical data do not reveal the impact of Church personnel on group activities with any greater precision. We shall however return to the issue of Church-related interference in the following Chapter, where the internal dynamics of individual CEBs will be discussed in detail.

Table 3.7 finally, provides data on the extent to which the two group-types in our sample are involved with other Church-related groups or events. At the parish level, first of all, it will be noted that a large percentage of middle and lower-class groups actively participate with other

local CEBs in planning parish functions such as bazaars, socials, holy days, special religious services, and so forth.

TABLE 3.7

DIFFERENCES IN CHURCH-RELATED INVOLVEMENT BETWEEN CEB-TYPES

(in numbers of groups)
(percentages in parentheses)

Type of Involvement	All groups (n = 22)	Group-type	
		M-CEBs (n = 11)	L-CEBs (n = 11)
Maintain contact with other parish CEBs	17 (77)	8 (73)	9 (82)
Send representatives to CEB related conferences	12 (55)	6 (55)	6 (55)

About half of L-CEBs and M-CEBs moreover, regularly attend the CEB conferences or meetings which are frequently held at the various levels of Church government (eg. Sectoral, Regional, etc.). Both CEB-types consequently, appear to be similarly integrated within the institutional structure of the Church.

To conclude, we see that overall, neither the middle nor the lower-class CEBs represent anything approaching pure group-types. If anything, the differences within CEB-types are as great or greater than those existing between them. Those areas where inter-group-type dissimilarities do appear

significant, are as follows. The L-CEBs are more likely than their middle-class counterparts to: i) concern themselves with social or political issues; ii) engage in innovative activities such as the celebration of local mass, the preparation of such services and other sacraments, and the neighbourhood improvement projects (revindicações); iii) maintain community centres; and iv) possess functional sub-groups. These four tendencies it was also shown however, have in all probability more to do with Church-related than class-related factors. This assertion was given further weight by the existence of a fifth inter-CEB-type difference; that is, that the L-CEBs are much more likely to be accompanied by Church personnel, than are the middle-class groups.

In the next section, we shall continue our examination of lower and middle-class CEB-types, but this time from a slightly different perspective. Specifically, we shall be presenting and comparing data relating to the membership characteristics of the group-types, so as to assess the implications of such characteristics for CEB structure and orientation.

Differences and Similarities Between CEB Member-Types

Data on individual CEB members were obtained by means of a self-administered questionnaire. This questionnaire sought information about members' attitudes, behaviour, and

personal background, and was given to all participants within each of the 22 groups in our sample.

Of the nearly 400 questionnaires distributed, some 275 were returned, indicating a response rate of approximately 70 percent. Respondents were split moreover, almost evenly between our two CEB-types, with 124 belonging to middle-class CEBs, and 151 to lower-class groups.

Table 3.8 presents a statistical profile of L-CEB and M-CEB participants. As indicated in the table, there are some marked differences in background characteristics between the two member-types. To begin with, lower-class CEB members are slightly more likely than their M-CEB counterparts to be female, and much more likely to be under 30 years of age. As a corollary of the age factor in particular, L-CEB participants are also more apt to be unmarried.

The lower-class members, in addition, tend disproportionately to be newcomers to the city of São Paulo, with the majority born outside the area and or in rural districts. This finding is largely in keeping with what we already know statistically about the residents of São Paulo's outlying suburbs (where the majority of our sample L-CEBs are situated). As we related in Chapter II, the periphery has been growing rapidly in recent years as a result of an influx of migrants from neighbouring Minas Gerais and other northeastern states.

TABLE 3.8
 PERSONAL BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS OF CEB MEMBERS
 (in percentages)

Characteristic	Group membership		Tau B
	M-CEB (n = 124)	L-CEB (n = 151)	
Sex, female	56.5	66.2	.100*
Age, under 30	15.6	46.9	-.332*
Married	79.5	58.3	.225*
Born outside São Paulo	27.4	53.6	.264*
Born in a rural area	25.7	60.6	.349*
Education, beyond secondary level	52.1	24.5	.284*
Profession, blue collar	20.8	71.6	.506*
Salary, over 5 MS	63.2	23.7	-.399*

*Indicates that differences between member-types are significant at or below the .05 level.

Not surprisingly, the most serious inter-group differences shown in the table are those pertaining to class-related variables, such as education and income. As expected for example, lower-class participants are much less likely than their middle-class counterparts to have received educational training beyond the secondary school level. As a direct consequence perhaps, they also exhibit a greater

tendency to be employed in blue-collar trades. The earning power of L-CEB members moreover, is significantly less than that of M-CEB participants. Fewer than one-quarter of lower-class participants reported family earnings in excess of 5 minimum salaries per month, as opposed to two-thirds of middle-class members.

Given such broad differences in background between the member-types, one might expect a good deal of dissimilarity in their attitudes and behaviour with respect to secular and Church life. The tables which follow however, demonstrate that overall, this is not the case. It is only with respect to politically-related variables that the lower and middle class CEB members differ appreciably, but only, as we shall see, to a rather limited and qualified extent.

To begin, Table 3.9 provides an overview of L-CEB and M-CEB members' Church-related beliefs and behaviour. The percentages expressed in the table (and in others which follow) it should be pointed out, represent the proportion of all members within each group-type responding positively on any given item.

Note first of all, that high percentages of both L-CEB and M-CEB participants engage regularly in religious activities of a traditional type, attending mass at least once a week, praying to God, and involving themselves in parish groups other than the CEBs. There is admittedly, a slight but consistent trend for lower-class participants to

TABLE 3.9
 DIFFERENCES IN RELIGIOUS BEHAVIOUR AND ATTITUDES BETWEEN
 M-CEB AND L-CEB MEMBERS
 (in percentages)

Behaviour or belief	Group membership		
	M-CEB (n = 124)	L-CEB (n = 151)	Tau B
Attend mass at least once a week	79.7	73.3	.100*
Pray regularly to God	91.9	78.8	.181*
Participated in one or more religious groups during the past 5 years	63.7	52.3	-.099*
Describe Jesus Christ as a 'liberator'	20.2	36.4	-.178*
Believe the Church defends their interests	82.3	81.5	.010
Believe the Church can resolve:			
Material problems	82.3	79.5	.035
Spiritual problems	85.5	75.5	.124*
Social injustice	76.6	68.9	.086
Personal problems	79.0	70.9	.093

* Indicates that differences between member-types are significant at or below the .05 level.

adhere less strictly to such practices. Lower frequency of attendance at mass or involvement in Church circles among this group may however be related to the fact that L-CEB members, generally speaking, must travel much farther to their local church than their middle-class counterparts. This is because parishes on the periphery tend to be considerably larger and thus less well 'serviced' institutionally than centrally located urban ones.⁶

When we examine members' attitudes toward the 'new' Church in Brazil, the relationship between our two group-types is reversed. Thirty-six percent of the lower-class participants for example, as compared to just 20 percent of their more affluent counterparts, chose to describe Jesus Christ as the 'liberator of the poor and oppressed'. Such a response is largely in keeping with the view of Christ espoused by social progressives within the Church. Any suggestion though, that L-CEB participants are thus more in tune with the dictates of the 'new' Church than are M-CEB members, must be qualified. As the table shows, the majority of respondents within both CEB-types in fact rejected the liberationist interpretation of Jesus' role.

TABLE 3.10
 DIFFERENCES IN SECULAR ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOUR BETWEEN
 M-CEB AND L-CEB MEMBERS
 (in percentages)

Attitude or behaviour	Group membership		
	M-CEB (n = 124)	L-CEB (n = 151)	Tau B
Believed to defend their interests:			
Unions	55.6	61.6	-.060
Armed Forces	37.9	33.8	.042
Government	29.0	17.9	.132*
Politicians	15.3	19.2	-.050
Would support the Partido dos Trabalhadores	17.7	39.1	-.232*
Participated in one or more secular groups during the past 5 years	16.9	32.5	.177

*Indicates that differences between member-types are significant at or below the .05 level.

As regards finally, faith in the Church as an institution, CEB-type differences in members' attitudes are again less than dramatic. Substantial portions of both lower and middle-class memberships believe that the Church does defend their interests, and that it is capable of resolving a wide range of difficulties. L-CEB members do appear

marginally less confident in the Church than do M-CEB members, especially with regard to the ability of the institution to resolve spiritual problems. This is owing perhaps to the previously demonstrated fact that they are slightly less involved in the day to day religious activities of the parish Church.

The overwhelming faith in the Church expressed by members of both group-types contrasts sharply with their attitudes toward secular institutions, as Table 3.10 above demonstrates. Next to the Church, it would appear that only labour unions are confided in with any degree of assurance. For both member-types, the second most trusted secular institution is the Armed Forces. This result was somewhat unexpected, especially for the L-CEB members, whose class has perhaps suffered the most from the repressive social and economic policies adopted by the military since they assumed political power in 1964.

At the bottom of the list of trusted institutions for all CEB participants were elected politicians, and government in the broad sense. Middle-class CEB members were admittedly more likely than their less affluent counterparts to trust this latter institution, because perhaps government has been kinder to them in terms of providing basic services, employment opportunities, and so forth.

Much stronger disagreement between member-types becomes apparent if we examine their political party preferences. As the table shows, nearly 40 percent of all L-CEB members support the left-wing Partido dos Trabalhadores (Workers' Party). They were consequently, over 3 times likelier than the population at large to do so, seeing that during the 1982 General Elections, the PT managed to capture only 12 percent of the popular vote in São Paulo (TRE, 1982). Among middle-class CEB members, only 18 percent were similarly attracted to the PT, with the majority stating a preference for the more moderate PMDB (Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement) which currently controls the São Paulo state and municipal governments.

Table 3.10 shows as well that the lower-class members differed from their middle-class counterparts with regard to participation in secular groups or associations. Just about one-third of the former had recently been involved in one or more secular groups, while only one-sixth of the middle-class membership was similarly engaged. Such a difference is at least partially attributable to the fact that L-CEB members are employed, as we saw, in blue-collar occupations, and are thus likely to be involved with labour unions. Various types of clubs and neighbourhood associations, to which many L-CEB members may have previously belonged, are also known to exist on the periphery in abundant numbers (Schmitter, 1971).

Turning now to the quality of members' attachments to their groups, (Table 3.11), we see again a number of interesting similarities, and for the most part, only slight differences between CEB-types. Note first of all, that both L-CEB and M-CEB participants rated a number of possible reasons for joining their group, such as the desire to help others, faith enhancement, and the need for human contact, with equally high importance. All members were slightly less inclined though, to indicate that they merely sought to give their lives some purpose.

The rather slight tendency for lower-class participants to rate all such factors lower than M-CEB members is not easily explained. As there is no clear pattern distinguishing the L-CEB response on the four items however, we might surmise that lower-class members were simply less able than their middle-class counterparts to clearly articulate their reasons for joining.

Table 3.11 also shows that members of the two CEB-types were equally and highly likely to have known at least some of the other group members upon joining. In the majority of cases, these individuals knew each other because they lived in the same neighbourhood. Contrary to popular belief therefore, the middle-class CEBs are as much natural communities as their lower-class equivalents; perhaps even more so, given that fully two-thirds of M-CEB members had been asked by a friend or relative to become part of the

TABLE 3.11
 DIFFERENCES IN QUALITY OF MEMBER-CEB ATTACHMENTS BETWEEN
 M-CEB AND L-CEB MEMBERS
 (in percentages)

Quality of attachment	Group membership		
	M-CEB (n = 124)	L-CEB (n = 151)	Tau B
Reason for joining:			
To help others	83.9	75.5	.102*
To enhance personal faith	90.3	73.5	.213*
For human contact	82.3	77.5	.059
To give life a purpose	64.5	61.6	.030
Knew all or some members before joining	92.5	89.1	.057
Knew members because all lived in the same neighbourhood	71.9	69.6	.018
Invited by a friend or relative to join group	66.9	51.0	.160*
Have been a member for less than 2 years	25.3	58.1	.305*

* Indicates that differences between member-types are significant at or below the .05 level.

group, while only about half of L-CEB participants were similarly invited.

Perhaps the most interesting observation from the table is that the lower-class CEBs maintain a much higher

proportion of new members than the more affluent groups. As the mean age of both group-types is approximately 6.5 years (as noted earlier), it is extremely doubtful that such a high figure for the L-CEBs represents just those members who belong to those few groups which are under 2 years old. Nor is it likely that all of the lower-class CEBs have experienced a membership boom in recent years for some unexplained reason. The most plausible explanation is that

TABLE 3.12

DIFFERENCES IN PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS OF GROUPS BETWEEN

M-CEB AND L-CEB MEMBERS

(in percentages)

Changes perceived	Group membership		
	M-CEB (n = 124)	L-CEB (n = 151)	Tau B
Relationship with Church enhanced	75.8	72.8	.033
Family life improved	58.1	50.3	.077
Interest in others' problems increased	80.6	64.2	.181*
Consciousness of social and political problems enhanced	44.4	55.6	-.112*

*Indicates that differences between member-types are significant at or below the .05 level.

the L-CEB sustain much higher turn-over rates in membership than the M-CEBs. As to why the lower-class group participants should in time become alienated from their CEBs, we shall discuss in some detail when reviewing our qualitative group data to be presented in Chapters IV and V.

Data on members' beliefs regarding the extent to which the CEBs have contributed to change in their lives are presented in Table 3.12 above. In the case of the first two variables shown, little difference between member-types is evident. About three-quarters of the membership within M-CEBs and L-CEBs now claim to be closer to the Church as a result of their CEB experience, and approximately half within each claim to have witnessed some improvement in their family life. With regard to the former observation in particular, there would certainly seem to exist no tendency toward sectarianism on the part of CEB members affiliated with either group-type. Rather, the majority of CEB members appear to be moving closer to the institutional Church, in accordance with the wishes of the hierarchy (see Chapter II).

With respect to the perceived social 'payoffs' of the CEBs, a rather interesting pattern emerges. Middle-class members, it will be noted, are most apt to express an enhanced interest in others' problems than are less affluent participants. The latter however, disproportionately tend to possess an increased consciousness of social and political issues. Such a pattern seems to suggest that the reportedly

greater emphasis on secular concerns within the L-CEBs (see Table 3.3) is to some extent taking root among their membership. The members of the middle-class groups by contrast, still appear to be thinking in terms of good-will, fraternity, and helping others.

Unfortunately though, this pattern does not appear to be reflected in members' participation rates for certain types of group activities. As Table 3.13 clearly shows, members of both lower and middle-class CEBs are almost equally likely to be attracted to both traditional and innovative activities, where these activities are offered by their groups. M-CEB members, it is true, do show a greater affinity for charity work; yet they are slightly more likely than their less affluent counterparts to engage in innovative undertakings such as reflection, and political consciousness-raising.

Middle-class members on the whole moreover, were just as inclined as those from lower-class groups to express a desire to see greater emphasis on innovative activities, regardless of whether or not these activities were currently being offered by their CEB. Thus, even though there is a slightly greater tendency for these activities to be actually carried out in the lower-class CEBs (see Table 3.3), the desirability of such functions is not related to the class position of the CEB participant.

TABLE 3.13
 DIFFERENCES IN RATES OF PARTICIPATION IN SELECT GROUP
 ACTIVITIES BETWEEN M-CEB AND L-CEB MEMBERS
 (in percentages)

Activity	Group membership		
	M-CEB**	L-CEB	Tau B
Traditional activities:			
Charity work	(n = 104) 61.5	(n = 109) 47.4	.138*
Bible study	(n = 114) 59.6	(n = 121) 59.5	.001
Innovative activities:			
Preparation of religious services	(n = 72) 59.7	(n = 99) 57.6	.021
Reflection and discussion	(n = 105) 73.3	(n = 113) 64.6	.094
Political consciousness-raising	(n = 66) 42.4	(n = 99) 35.4	.071
Desire more emphasis upon innovative activities	(n = 124) 43.5	(n = 151) 47.7	-.041

* Indicates that differences between member-types are significant at or below the .05 level.

** N's in this table will vary from item to item, depending on the total number of participants within those particular groups offering the activity in question.

TABLE 3.14
 DIFFERENCES IN PERCEPTION OF AND PARTICIPATION IN GROUP
 DECISION-MAKING BETWEEN M-CEB AND L-CEB MEMBERS
 (in percentages)

Participation and perceptions	Group membership		
	M-CEB (n = 124)	L-CEB (n = 151)	Tau B
Participate regularly in group decision-making process	62.9	58.9	.040
Leaders recognized as controlling decision-making	23.4	31.8	-.093
Leaders viewed as more committed to group than ordinary members	10.5	18.5	-.112*

* Indicates that differences between member-types are significant at or below the .05 level.

Table 3.14 finally, examines the dynamics of the group decision-making process within the two CEB-types. What is important to observe firstly, is that both L-CEB and M-CEB members are equally likely to involve themselves in running their groups. Both group-types consequently, must be seen as equally democratic. It will also be noted that there is a slight tendency for L-CEB participants to see 'leaders' as controlling the group decision-making process,⁷ and as being somewhat more committed to the CEB than ordinary members.

Because of the rather small numbers of lower-class respondents holding such views, especially in the case of the latter variable, little can really be added to our understanding of internal CEB democracy at this point.

The recognition of the leadership per se as a distinct group, on the part of at least some members, is however potentially revealing in other ways. The importance of a distinction between members and lay leaders in particular, becomes evident if we review the major points of divergence between the CEB member-types generally.

L-CEB Leaders as an Innovative Vanguard

Looking once again at Tables 3.8 through 3.14, it appears that lower and middle-class CEB participants were most inclined to differ on those variables which might be described as 'political'. Specifically, the L-CEB members demonstrate a tendency to be more liberal or socially progressive than their more affluent counterparts in their willingness to: i) describe Jesus Christ as a 'liberator'; ii) support the left-wing Partido dos Trabalhadores; iii) belong to secular associations; and iv) express heightened awareness of social and political issues. If however, we control for membership status within each CEB category, a rather interesting relationship emerges between ordinary participants and their lay leaders; a relationship which

suggests that differences between member-types generally are not as profound as previously envisioned.

Table 3.15 provides an overview of members' and leaders' responses within the two CEB-types, on the four politically-related variables cited above. Comparing frequencies for ordinary lower and middle-class members first, we see that there still exists a greater tendency for L-CEB participants to respond positively on all items. What is important to note however, is that with but one exception (i.e. secular group participation), the percentage spread between lower and middle-class members is considerably less than between L-CEB participants and their own leadership. The M-CEB leaders by contrast, differ little from the middle-class membership. This clearly suggests that the liberal stance exhibited by L-CEB members as a group (as originally shown in Tables 3.9, 3.10, and 3.12), has been significantly influenced by the atypical responses of the lower-class lay leadership.

Further evidence of the special status of the L-CEB leadership emerges if we examine still other variables on which we had previously discovered broad agreement between member-types. In Table 3.16 for example, we see that where beliefs and behaviour associated with certain group activities are concerned, previously exhibited tendencies (see Table 3.13) seem to hold for ordinary lower and middle-class participants. It is also apparent however, that on

TABLE 3.15

DIFFERENCES IN POLITICAL ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOUR BETWEEN
CEB MEMBERS AND LEADERS
(in percentages)

Attitude or behaviour	M-CEB			L-CEB		
	Leaders (n = 43)	Members (n = 81)	Tau B	Leaders (n = 56)	Members (n = 95)	Tau B
Describe Christ as 'liberator'	23.3	18.5	.056	51.8	27.4	.245*
Support the PT	11.6	21.0	-.116	50.0	32.6	.171*
Belong to secular groups	16.3	17.3	.012	37.5	29.5	-.082
Enhanced consciousness of social or political issues	44.2	44.4	-.002	64.3	50.5	.133*

*Indicates that differences between members and leaders of each CEB-type are significant at or below the .05 level.

TABLE 3.16

DIFFERENCES IN BEHAVIOUR AND ATTITUDES WITH RESPECT TO GROUP
 ACTIVITIES BETWEEN CEB MEMBERS AND LEADERS
 (in percentages)

Behaviour or attitude	M-CEB**			L-CEB		
	Leaders	Members	Tau B	Leaders	Members	Tau B
Participate in reflection	(n = 39) 84.6	(n = 66) 66.7	.196*	(n = 45) 84.4	(n = 68) 51.5	.337*
Participate in consciousness-raising	(n = 29) 37.9	(n = 37) 45.9	-.080	(n = 43) 48.8	(n = 56) 25.0	.247*
Desire increased emphasis on innovative activities	(n = 43) 34.9	(n = 81) 48.1	-.127	(n = 56) 57.1	(n = 95) 42.1	.145*

*Indicates that differences between members and leaders of each CEB-type are significant at or below the .05 level.

**N's are cited in the table in the manner apparent for reasons cited in Table 3.13.

each variable, L-CEB leaders and members differ to a greater extent than do their respective M-CEB counterparts. To be precise, the L-CEB leadership is much more likely than the membership to participate in reflection and political consciousness-raising, and to desire increased emphasis within their groups on innovative activities such as these.

On the whole, dissimilarities between M-CEB leaders and members in these respects are less dramatic, and do not follow any set pattern. While middle-class leaders for example, were more willing than ordinary participants to engage in reflection, they were less inclined to join in consciousness-raising, or to be desirous of seeing innovative activities receive more attention.

Both Tables 3.15 and 3.16 persuasively suggest the existence of a kind of vanguard within the lower-class CEBs, which is much more in tune with the teachings of the 'new' Church in São Paulo than are ordinary L-CEB members. No such

TABLE 3.17
DIFFERENCES IN PERSONAL BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS
BETWEEN CEB MEMBERS AND LEADERS
(in percentages)

Characteristics	M-CEB			L-CEB		
	Leaders (n = 43)	Members (n = 81)	Tau B	Leaders (n = 56)	Members (n = 95)	Tau B
Age, over 40 years	72.1	62.0	-.101	50.0	29.2	-.208*
Education, secondary level or beyond	42.5	57.0	.136	32.7	19.6	-.148*

*Indicates that differences between members and leaders of each CEB-type are significant at or below the .05 level.

vanguard by contrast, seems to be present in the M-CEBs. If anything, leaders here tend to be slightly less liberal or progressive than the regular membership.

In Table 3.17, we present some factors which might conceivably account for the socially progressive stance of the L-CEB leadership. Age for example, is frequently put forth as a predictor of liberal attitudes within a population (see for instance Kriegel, 1978; Mannheim, 1936; and Riley, 1978). As the table demonstrates however, in this particular case, age is not likely to be a factor influencing attitudes or behaviour, at least in the expected direction. This is because both middle and lower-class leaders tend to the whole to be considerably older than the ordinary participants within their respective group-types.

This being the case however, one might surmise that education should be a possible explanatory factor, seeing that older individuals may have received more schooling than younger ones. At first glance, this would indeed appear to be true. Middle-class leaders it will be noted, are less well educated than members, while conversely, L-CEB directors are more highly educated than their constituency. One might argue therefore, that the higher educational level of the L-CEB leaders, as opposed to that of the general membership, renders the former more likely than the latter to be socially progressive. For M-CEB leaders and members, the exact opposite could be held to be true. Such an argument is

however flawed, if we consider that the more affluent leaders, being the most highly educated group per se, should be more liberal than their L-CEB equivalent. In reality though, we already know this to be false.

Aside from their personal background characteristics, another possible explanation for the progressive stance of the L-CEB leadership may lie with the quality of their relations with the institutional Church. As Table 3.18 demonstrates, lower-class CEB leaders, like their middle-

TABLE 3.18
DIFFERENCES IN RELIGIOUS PRACTICES BETWEEN CEB MEMBERS
AND LEADERS
(in percentages)

Practice	M-CEB			L-CEB		
	Leaders (n = 43)	Members (n = 81)	Tau B	Leaders (n = 56)	Members (n = 95)	Tau B
Attend mass regularly	93.1	72.4	.113	89.1	64.2	.285*
Pray regularly	81.4	71.6	.107	82.1	56.8	.258*
Participate in other religious groups	37.2	18.5	-.205*	32.1	13.7	-.220*

*Indicates that differences between members and leaders of each CEB-type are significant at or below the .05 level.

class equivalents, are considerably more inclined to attend mass regularly, to pray, and to participate in non-CEB related religious groups than are ordinary members. These similarities between leader-types admittedly, do not offer any immediate clue as to why they have adopted somewhat opposite ideological positions. We should like to suggest however, that it is not the intensity of their ties to the Church which might explain the propensity of L-CEB leaders in particular to adhere to socially progressive attitudes and behaviour, but the nature of the Church to which they are tied.

The L-CEB leaders, it may be argued, have developed a somewhat greater affinity for the 'new' Church of Cardinal Arns, the Church of the poor and oppressed. This may stem from their close association with younger, politically progressive pastors who (as we saw earlier in the Chapter) maintain a strong presence in the suburban parishes where the vast majority of L-CEB leaders in our sample are situated. By contrast, the M-CEB leaders seem to be much more divided between the dictates of the 'new' Church, and those of the old, the remnants of which are still very much alive in the teaching and practice of the older clergy in the centrally located middle-class parishes.⁸

Summary and Conclusion

In this Chapter, we have presented a good deal of information on CEB distribution and growth in São Paulo, and on the organizational structure, basic activities, and membership characteristics of 22 sample groups chosen from throughout the Archdiocese. In order to facilitate an organized summary of the data, it might be useful therefore to briefly review our major findings in light of the three research hypotheses posited in Chapter I.

Following this procedure, we shall also be able to assess the extent to which these hypotheses are supported by what we know thus far about the CEBs' nature and thrust. To recapitulate briefly, we shall be testing the hypotheses in two distinct ways. At the most elementary level, we shall be looking for qualities of the L-CEBs (assumed by the grassroots view to be the only authentic groups), which directly negate or substantiate the hypothesis under study. In addition however, we shall also apply a kind of cross-test, examining similarities between the L-CEBs and their more affluent counterparts in order to assess the degree to which the CEBs of the poor relate uniquely to the hypotheses. In this manner, the underlying premise of each hypothesis, i.e. that it is social class which ultimately determines the presence or absence of a specific CEB characteristic, may be more thoroughly challenged.

To begin our analysis, the data would appear to lend little credence to our initial hypothesis, which states that the CEBs are an ideologically homogeneous collectivity operated by and for the poor and oppressed. First and foremost, it would seem to be an error to assert that the groups are exclusively a lower-class phenomenon. Regional analysis, it is true, did show social class to be a major factor determining the physical distribution of CEBs in São Paulo. Where CEB growth was concerned however, class was of considerably less importance, and it was shown that the groups were increasing in number in both lower and middle-class areas. It would appear consequently, that as a phenomenon, the CEBs relate to all social classes, as Bruneau (1982: 140) has suggested.

Secondly, our sample data provide no evidence to support the notion that the CEBs are necessarily oriented towards the 'liberation' of the poor in any sense. Considered by themselves, even the lower-class groups were a rather diverse lot in terms of basic orientation and activities. Only about half for example, were involved with secular political causes, while the balance pursued more religious ends. In addition, there were no activities of an innovative type in which all of the L-CEBs took part. Nor did they shun involvement with more traditional religious undertakings such as Bible study and charity work. In such respects, the L-CEBs were moreover, barely distinguishable

from their middle-class equivalents, which also engaged in a similarly broad range of activities. Additionally, it should be mentioned that member participation rates for all types of group functions were roughly equivalent for the two CEB categories.

Irrespective of their class origin finally, CEB participants exhibited little consistency in their adoption of politically-related beliefs and behaviour. Admittedly, lower-class participants were slightly more likely than M-CEB members to adhere to socially progressive views. When leadership was controlled however, the importance of this distinction was diminished, as it appeared that an elite vanguard of L-CEB directors were the real carriers of the social teachings of the 'new' Church.

Hypothesis number two states that the CEBs are inherently democratic, ostensibly because they are formed among common people at the grassroots level. With respect to the lower-class groups first of all, the data did not clearly bear this out. While a substantial portion of the L-CEB membership did indeed regularly participate in the group decision-making process, only about half of the groups themselves maintained a representative governing council or conselho. The rest were under the control of individual lay or religious leaders. Where the middle-class groups were concerned moreover, almost identical findings were reported.

The propensity of a CEB to operate democratically (or undemocratically as the case may be) must consequently, be related to factors other than those associated with the class origins of the membership.

Our final hypothesis asserts that the CEBs maintain a special relationship with the Church, and rely but little on institutional support. Here again, there is little evidence to uphold such a claim. Firstly, as we noted earlier in the Chapter, the type of religious personnel working within a given area appeared to influence the CEB growth rate for that area. Within the Archdiocese as a whole, we observed specifically, the CEBs grew in number where younger pastors were stationed.

In addition, our sample data demonstrated that pastoral agents from the Church were likely to be involved in the formation of all CEBs, and were especially active in the day to day administration of the lower-class groups in particular. The presence of these personnel in the L-CEBs moreover, seemed to be highly correlated with the adoption of politically-related causes (such as the revindicações), within such groups.

Lastly, it was shown that both L-CEBs and M-CEBs were equally likely to maintain close and regular intra-institutional contacts. These occurred at the parish level, with various other religious circles, and beyond, at CEB-related conferences sponsored by the hierarchy.

In two fundamental respects, the data do not then generally support the three research hypotheses. On the one hand, extant patterns of CEB growth in the Archdiocese, and the nature and thrust of the sample lower-class groups, offer a direct challenge to the characterization of the CEBs which the hypotheses suggest. On the other hand, the CEBs of the poor appear to have a good deal in common with their middle-class counterparts, thus calling into question the underlying premise of each hypothesis that what the CEBs are and do is intimately related to their class origins. In terms of competing theories consequently, the data lead us away from the grassroots vision of the CEBs, and enhance the validity of the institutional view, which interprets the groups as receiving their stamp primarily from religious and institutional sources as opposed to their social location.

It must be cautioned however, that to this point, we have dealt only with institutional data in aggregate form. What still remains to be seen is whether or not the general trends we have observed thus far hold true at the level of individual CEBs. In the following Chapters therefore, we shall investigate qualitatively each of our sample groups, describing in greater detail their physical location, membership characteristics, basic activities, organizational structure, and institutional ties.

NOTES

¹Of the 22 CEBs in our sample, only 21 were in fact chosen according to the sampling plan described. An additional CEB was selected later because of the special relationship it maintained with another group. For a more detailed examination of the group selection process, research methodology, and related problems, see the Appendix.

²It will undoubtedly be argued that all of the lower-class CEBs will in time adopt a 'liberating' posture. Though it is difficult to argue against such a claim, we can state however, that within our sample, there is no direct link between a group's age and its proclivity to adopt a secular cause. The relationship between CEB age and activities will be explored more fully in Chapter VI.

³The traditional-innovative typology employed here was originally developed by Bruneau (1982: 139).

⁴Within the CEBs, the term 'mass' is reserved for worship services performed by a priest only. Although technically identical to the mass, celebrações are offered by nuns and lay ministers.

⁵We are referring here to studies conducted by Bruneau (1982; 1983), Demo (CNBB, 1977), and Gregory (1973).

⁶This is in fact one of the reasons why the CEBs are so popular on the periphery.

⁷By control, we mean here that leaders take exclusive charge of decision-making, even though they may from time to time consult with the membership at large.

⁸For an excellent analysis of pastors' attitudes and their impact upon the laity in various areas of São Paulo, see Baraglia (1983).

CHAPTER FOUR: THE NATURE AND ORIENTATION OF LOWER-CLASS CEBs

Introduction

In this Chapter, we shall attempt to describe in detail the structure and orientation of the 11 sample CEBs which are located in lower-class areas of the Archdiocese. As these are situated within three different Episcopal Regions, i.e. Santo Amaro, SÉ, and São Miguel, the Chapter will be divided into a corresponding number of sections. Each will open with a general characterization of the Region in question, followed by an examination of the parishes, and subsequently of the specific CEBs within those parishes, chosen for analysis.

The sample CEBs will be carefully examined under four principal headings: 1) Background characteristics; 2) Goals and activities; 3) Organizational structure; and 4) Institutional relations. Basically, it will be shown that in each of these fundamental respects, the lower-class groups are a rather diverse collectivity, as in fact was suggested in the previous Chapter. In addition, we shall be able to demonstrate with much greater precision, how it is that Church-related, as opposed to class-based factors contribute to the essential nature and thrust of each CEB.

Part I: Região Santo Amaro

Our first Episcopal Region, Santo Amaro, is located in the southwestern section of the Archdiocese. This Region has a population of approximately 1.8 million, some 9 percent of which (according to the homogeneous-area ranking scheme employed in Chapter III) is resident in urban middle-class districts of rank 5. The vast majority of Regional inhabitants live on the periphery, with some 62 and 29 percent located in lower-class areas of rank 7 and 8 respectively (Emplasa, 1982: 77; GESP, 1977: 5).

The population of Santo Amaro is divided into 4 sub-Regional sectors, and 32 parishes. The 32 parishes are administered by a corresponding number of pastors whose statistical profile roughly resembles that of Archdiocesan pastors as a whole. About 52 percent for example, are native Brazilians, as compared with 56 percent for the Archdiocese. Their mean age is 49, just slightly below the Archdiocesan average of 52; and just over half were ordained after the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council, as contrasted with 43 percent for all of São Paulo (CERIS, 1977; Guia Geral, 1983).

The CEB phenomenon in the Region is widely reported to be well established, with religious and lay personnel often citing the existence of groups over 10 and even 20 years of age.¹ As compared with other Regions of comparable

size which are also located primarily on the periphery of São Paulo, the number of CEBs in the area is not however great, and has in fact been diminishing over time (see Table 3.1 in Chapter III). In 1983 for instance, there were just 52 CEBs in existence, down from the 62 reported in the 1980 Guia Geral (Guia Geral, (1980; 1983).

Why this situation should exist is not immediately clear. One of the reasons for the hiatus in CEB growth in Santo Amaro may however be related to recent changes in the upper command structure of the Region. Following the creation of the Santo Amaro Episcopal Region in 1975, up until 1983, the area had been administered by Bishop Mauro Morelli. Dom Mauro is a native paulistano who has maintained a long association with various Catholic and secular workers movements within and outside São Paulo. From 1966 to 1974 for example, he was advisor to the Workers' Circle of Rio Claro (São Paulo state), and as recently as 1980, was deeply involved with the cause of striking metalworkers in the industrial belt of Greater São Paulo (see Chapter II).

Two individuals who knew him personally have described Dom Mauro as "a very open person, very progressive," (Int. SA-7, 5/3/84), and as someone who "approved greatly of the pastoral priorities of the Archdiocese," (eg. the Pastoral of the Periphery, of Minors, Human Rights, etc., as outlined in Chapter II) (Int. SA-6, 5/24/84). One of the pastoral lines reportedly pursued by

Dom Mauro with particular enthusiasm was the CEBs, and he is widely credited with making the phenomenon a top priority in the Region. His work with the groups in Santo Amaro nevertheless ended abruptly in early 1983 when, for undisclosed reasons, Dom Mauro was transferred to another diocese on the periphery of Rio de Janeiro.

The current bishop of Santo Amaro Region is 52 year-old Dom Antonio Gaspar who, like Dom Mauro, is a native of São Paulo. The son of a wealthy real-estate developer, Dom Antonio has spent much of his clerical career working in urban middle-class parishes. Consequently, unlike his predecessor, he has had very little direct contact with the working-classes, or with the realities of everyday life on the periphery of São Paulo.

During his relatively short time in Santo Amaro, Dom Antonio has come to be regarded as a conservative, owing to the fact that he has failed to forcefully implement Archdiocesan priorities, and thus to clearly demonstrate the Church's 'preferential option for the poor' in the Region. Lay and religious personnel interviewed tended to view such caution as attributable to his inexperience as a Regional administrator, and his lack of first-hand knowledge about local problems. "He is still new," offered one lay observer for instance, "and doesn't yet know how to be a bishop," (Resp. 1-6:3, 2/26/84). A priest claimed similarly that:

The bishop is still fairly new and has yet to learn the area. He appears quite conservative but he doesn't hold back. Then again, he doesn't push ahead either (Int. SA-5, 1/23/84).

Dom Antonio's reputedly cautious stance manifests itself quite clearly in his rather limited approach to the CEBs in particular. When asked for example, about his interpretation of the CEB phenomenon, he replied only that his "own definition is the same as that of the Church," while adding briefly that the groups do "represents the force and organization of the people [and] give greater opportunity for participation," (Int. SA-1, 2/2/84). In addition, while asserting that the groups are indeed a top priority in the Region, he tended to view his own role in promoting their growth as merely approving, coordinating, and offering his physical presence. Certainly few supplementary materials have been produced by his staff for distribution in the CEBs, although Dom Antonio has encouraged the use of one of the more progressive liturgical pamphlets, Povo de Deus em São Paulo (People of God in São Paulo) in local religious services.²

So far, Dom Antonio's greatest innovation in the area of CEB promotion has been to launch a Regional planning study. Late in 1983, a number of booklets and questionnaires, under the title of Vamos Caminhar (Let's Go Forth), were distributed to parishes and lay groups with three ends in mind. These were: 1) to focus attention on

Regional and Archdiocesan priorities; 2) to gather statistics on existing CEBs and their activities; and 3) to obtain grassroots feedback on present and proposed programmes.

One other positive step has perhaps been the publication of a sector by sector analysis of accomplishments and difficulties associated with CEB development and the promotion of various other Archdiocesan priorities in Santo Amaro Region. The study is entitled Avaliação do Plano de Pastoral da Arquidiocese (Evaluation of the Archdiocesan Pastoral Plan) (1983).

For our own purposes, this last study is particularly important, as it points to a number of problems which, in addition to the bishop's own inertia, help to explain the diminution of the CEB phenomenon in the Region. Although these problems are too numerous to mention, some difficulties, as reported by religious personnel and various lay leaders, do appear with greater frequency than others. Among those with the most serious implications for CEB formation are the following:

1. Passivity, i.e. the lack of interest and collaboration with the CEBs among the general population.
2. Religious traditionalism. As one group of CEB leaders stated: "Some difficulty may be perceived in the relationship between faith and life; there is still a certain reluctance on the part of some who prefer things the way they were."
3. Lack of trained pastoral agents; lack of people really motivated to take charge of the CEBs.

4. Excessive politicization of leaders; especially priests who move too quickly from religious to political issues.

These kinds of problems are indeed rather common ones which will appear again and again as we discuss the internal structure of individual CEBs in the Region. They are problems moreover, we should like to emphasize, which are intimately associated with promoting the CEBs as an institutional strategy. They are not ones which would likely arise simply as a function of the groups' social location.

Paroquia São Gabriel³

The first two CEBs which we shall examine are located within the parish of São Gabriel. This parish is situated on the periphery, in the south central zone of Santo Amaro Region. São Gabriel has about 90 thousand inhabitants,⁴ the majority of whom are poor. At least 50 percent of all families in the area earn no more than 5 minimum salaries per month (PMSP, 1980).⁵

Administering the parish is a team of religious priests (members of the Congregação dos Missionarios Oblatos da Maria Imaculada - OMI) who live together in a small, rustic dwelling not unlike most others in the area. In charge of the group is Pe. Marcos, a 47 year-old Brazilian who has been working in São Gabriel since 1974.

As local pastor, Pe. Marcos is a committed CEB supporter, and shares the same enthusiasm for the groups

expressed by his Archbishop, Cardinal Arns. He refuses for example, to see the groups' political role as separate from their religious purpose, and is actively involved in CEB formation and development.

In quantitative terms at least, Pe. Marco's commitment to the CEBs would appear to have paid off. Currently, there are reported to be some 17 CEBs operating in the parish,⁶ most of which were formed subsequent to the priest's arrival.

Comunidade São José

Background Characteristics: The first of two local CEBs we shall describe is the Comunidade São José, which is one of the oldest groups in the São Gabriel parish. This CEB has been in existence for about 17 years, and currently has approximately 20 to 25 regular members. Most of these (70%) are members of low-income families earning less than 5 MS. The majority moreover (60%), are over 40 years of age, and some 70 percent are female.⁷

Goals and Activities: The Comunidade São José was originally formed by a group of concerned parents who wished to provide local religious instruction classes for their children. Since its inception however, the CEB has developed additional functions, of both a political and religious nature. In terms of its aims, and the complexity of the tasks which it

undertakes, the Comunidade São José is in fact one of the most evolved CEBs in the parish.

Within the religious sphere, the Comunidade has usurped many of the functions formerly offered exclusively by the parish church. For example, aside from religious instruction, used to impart the basics of Catholic teaching to the young, members prepare and offer weekly religious services known as celebrações. These are mass-like worship services (usually performed by a lay minister) during which participants celebrate their faith through song, prayer, Bible reading, and the Eucharist. Baptisms are also sometimes performed during the course of the ceremony.

Other religious activities in the Comunidade São José include baptismal preparation for prospective parents, intense Bible study, and group reflection. This last exercise typically involves joint interpretation of some aspect of the Gospel in light of its relationship to everyday life. Finally, CEB participants frequently offer charitable support to individual families as the need arises, and often plan bazaars, socials and religious festivals for simple diversion and or profit.⁸

The CEB's more political functions are slightly less diverse but are supported with equal enthusiasm by the membership. There is, first of all, political consciousness-raising, which usually involves the discussion of political issues of direct interest to the poor, eg. workers' rights,

political party platforms, police violence, women's issues, and so forth. More fundamentally perhaps, the CEB is also deeply involved with community improvement projects referred to as revindicações. The group's first such project was launched in 1976, shortly after Pe. Marco's arrival in the parish, and was aimed at legalizing the status of land plots in the area which had been transferred to their present owners without benefit of title. This accomplished, the CEB the circulated petitions throughout the neighbourhood in a bid to obtain running water and sewers. A short time later, both of these services were installed. In 1982, the CEB demanded and obtained street lights, and just last year was able to secure a pedestrian over-pass across a nearby busy highway. Currently, CEB members are fighting for paved streets, improved bus service, a local day-care centre; and a municipal health post.

Organizational Structure: As in virtually all our sample CEBs, there are few criteria for membership in the Comunidade São José, other than a willingness to participate in at least some group activities. Though technically open, direct participation in the leadership of the CEB is however restricted to a select few individuals, who are collectively referred to as the conselho or council. This elite steering group meets twice monthly, and consists of the local pastor, Pe. Marcos, and 6 of the CEB's most senior lay members.

One of the functions of the conselho is to take charge of group finances which go primarily toward the upkeep of the CEB's community centre.⁹ This structure was built some years ago by the membership on land which is owned by the central curia. Perhaps most importantly, the conselho is also responsible for both coordinating and providing key participants for the entire range of group functions.

In practice, nearly all of the activities offered by the Comunidade São José are carried out within specific teams or study circles. Thus, there are separate mini-groups for religious instruction, Bible study, reflection, liturgy, baptismal preparation, and for young people in general. Most of these meet on a weekly basis and there are general meetings of all involved in such groups (i.e. the entire CEB), every two weeks. During these general membership encounters, the conselho consults with ordinary participants on the progress of individual sub-groups, or on other matters of importance as they arise. Such meetings also provide an opportunity for political consciousness-raising as there is as yet no specific study circle which undertakes this function directly.

The group's celebrações are performed at the local community hall each Sunday by either Pe. Marcos, or the CEB's only ordained lay minister, Aida. These are open to all area residents, regardless of whether or not they attend other

group functions. In preparing worship services, Pe. Marcos and Aida are ostensibly aided by the CEB's liturgy preparation team, but the celebrações appear to contain very little original content. They are in fact carried out in a rather mechanical way, centering around a fixed format liturgical pamphlet entitled Todos Irmãos (All Brothers). This particular pamphlet, like most others, is divided into several parts; eg. Opening, Penitential Act, Hymn of Praise, Theme of Reflection, and so forth. The material within each section is simply read (or sung) aloud in turn by either the priest, lay commentator, designated lay readers, and or the entire congregation in unison.

Aside from the bi-weekly CEB encounters, the celebrações do admittedly provide an additional opportunity for less formal political discussion. In the Comunidade São José, as in other groups to be discussed, consciousness-raising at worship services is conducted following the homily. The priest or lay minister attempts to stimulate debate around some issue as suggested by that day's readings, such as the need for revindicações. Of the two types of meetings however, the bi-weekly CEB encounters provide the better setting for consciousness-raising, as full and free participation is virtually guaranteed due to the relatively small numbers present. Where general membership meetings usually draw no more than 15 to 20 individuals, the celebrações can attract well in excess of 100, thus limiting

opportunities for meaningful discussion. On the one hand, obviously not all can be afforded an opportunity to speak. On the other hand, most appear to lack the confidence to do so in front of such a large audience. Consequently, the discussion becomes dominated by the 2 or 3 self-confident individuals who seem to have already attained a certain degree of political awareness.

The neighbourhood improvement projects or revindicações, finally, unlike most other group functions, are not undertaken by any special team. Rather, they are initiated by conselho members directly. The process itself usually involves calling the membership together to discuss the particular problem at hand, and then drawing up and circulating petitions throughout the neighbourhood. Signed petitions are later taken to the appropriate city officials, and meetings subsequently arranged between CEB and government representatives. When such encounters finally occur, CEB delegates (who are normally conselho members), attempt to negotiate a deadline for the city to begin work towards rectifying the CEB's specific complaint. Once this deadline is determined, group leaders either wait for the city work crews to arrive, or for the negotiated start-up date to pass. When the latter occurs, as it frequently does, the conselho arranges further meetings with officials, each time arriving with a larger and larger contingent of local CEB members. In

this manner, constant pressure is applied on the authorities responsible to act.

Institutional relations: The Comunidade São José is both closely tied to, and dependent upon ecclesial authority. Although the CEB was essentially lay-initiated, it has long operated under the watchful eye of the parish pastor, Pe. Marcos who, as we stated earlier, is a prominent member of the group's central directorate.

When questioned, lay leaders adamantly asserted that they required Pe. Marcos' guidance and approval, and that the comunidade as a whole would likely not function as it presently does without his presence (Field notes, 1-4, 2/3/84). The CEB's only lay minister for example, found Pe. Marco' help indispensable in preparing the celebrações, in spite of the fact that the CEB maintains a liturgy group especially for this purpose. "Without Pe. Marcos," she claimed,

I don't know how the celebrações would turn out. It's really a lot of work, a lot of responsibility, and I can't always count on the others to help me out (Resp. 1-4:1, 5/23/84).

Pe. Marcos, for his part, is acutely cognizant of his special role within the group and speaks freely of his attempts to orient its members. The priest made specific reference for example, to certain 'threats' to be countered, such as the religious traditionalism engendered by the conservative Roman Catholic Charismatic Renewal Movement.

One time, he related, he had been forced to reprimand one of its adherents who was attempting to convince CEB members to abandon their involvement with the revindicações. The concentration of power within the group was also mentioned by Pe. Marcos as a major concern; one which he claims to combat by actively promoting frequent changes in the membership of the conselho (Field notes, 1-4, 1/23/84).

Such interference is justified, stated the priest, since the people are basically in need of guidance where both spiritual and temporal matters are concerned. "People," he explained, "have to be activated for the common good." "You have to have patience," Pe. Marcos warned however, since "real CEBs are not just created overnight," (Int. SA-5, 1/23/84).

Aside from the close relationship it maintains with Pe. Marcos, the Comunidade São José does sometimes act in conjunction with other parish CEBs in carrying out the revindicações. It appears in fact, to be moving more and more in this direction, as nearly all of its recent projects, eg. the pedestrian overpass, the healthcare centre, and improved bus service, have been undertaken together with neighbouring CEBs.

The group also sends representatives beyond the parish to CEB-related conferences. These encounters are sponsored by the hierarchy at the various levels of Church

government, and provide an opportunity for CEB members and Church personnel to share experiences, to develop strategies for enhancing CEB growth and development, and to exchange views on Church policy.¹⁰ The Comunidade São José's permanent envoy to these conferences is Dona Natalia, who reportedly is the one conselho member both available and willing to serve as such. To date, Dona Natalia has attended encounters up to and including the state level.

Contact with the Regional curia finally, is minimal, although the group does occasionally receive informational pamphlets or questionnaires (as for example, in the case of Dom Antonio's Regional planning study). In addition, some slight friction has been reported between the CEB and the Regional bishop with regard to the latter's choice of liturgical supplements. As the group's lay minister explained:

Here we use Todos Irmãos. The bishop wants us to use Povo de Deus em São Paulo, and there was discussion here about changing. I too wanted to change, but Todos Irmãos comes from the interior of the state and is closer to the reality of the people here. I believe Pe. Marcos wants to keep Todos Irmãos as well (Resp. 1-4: 1, 5/23/84).

As yet however, no move has been made on the part of either Dom Antonio or group members themselves to force compliance with the Regional directives.

Comunidade São Lourenço

Background Characteristics: The second parish CEB with which we shall deal is the Comunidade São Lourenço. This group is approximately 9 years old, and with just 10 to 15 active members is somewhat smaller than the Comunidade São José. Its membership profile however, is somewhat similar, as most participants are over 40 years of age, and female. A substantial portion of members' families moreover (78%) earn at or under the MS mark.

Goals and Activities: The Comunidade São Lourenço was originally formed to provide religious instruction and literacy training to local residents. In time however, the CEB's literacy training function was dropped, and the group no longer engages in activities of a secular nature. Rather, it pursues an extremely limited range of exclusively religious undertakings.

Bible study would appear to be the primary group activity, while only minor emphasis has been placed on less formal reflection and discussion. To some extent, charity work is also undertaken, and festivals occasionally planned to commemorate certain religious holidays.

Organizational Structure: Unlike the Comunidade São José, the Comunidade São Lourenço is rather weakly structured, in terms of both internal democracy and basic organization. In

the first place, there is no formal decision-making body such as a conselho. The group is led informally by a single layperson who had been appointed by the priest accompanying the CEB, Pe. Timothy. Secondly, there are no sub-groups or teams which coordinate specific group activities. Instead, all activities are undertaken by the entire CEB, which meets three times a week. Such encounters, which are held at the group's community centre (a conspicuously large and as yet unfinished structure), typically involve a mixture of song, prayer, Bible study, reflection and general discussion of group finances. No liturgical pamphlets or prepared materials are ever employed.

The CEB finally, offers no celebrações to members and or neighbouring families, as it does not yet possess any ordained lay ministers. Mass however, is celebrated once a week by Pe. Timothy, and is held at the group's community hall.

Institutional Relations: The Comunidade São Lourenço is rather loosely tied to the institutional Church. Officially however, it is supervised by Pe. Timothy, a 53 year-old Canadian who has worked much of his adult life in Brazil among the poor. He has been in the São Gabriel parish for about one year.

Like parish pastor Pe. Marcos, Pe. Timothy is a member of the OMI order. Yet his attitude toward the CEB

phenomenon is almost completely opposite to that of his superior, and can only be described as contemptuous. Pe. Timothy tends in fact to ignore the groups, and is extremely cynical when discussing their societal role, arguing that they will never develop an essentially communitarian thrust. The groups' orientation, laments Pe. Timothy, is entirely bourgeois, and is based primarily on the American Dream. To blame for this situation are lay leaders, who, in his view, have betrayed the interests of their class, and are simply using their position to enhance their social status and material well-being (eg. through the revindicações) (Int. 1-5: 2, 1/18/84).

In applying this 'hands off' approach to the Comunidade São Lourenço, Pe. Timothy has created some serious problems, according at least to group director, Eduardo. The comunidade, Eduardo related, "is weak, because the priest's support is lacking; he must take a more active role," (Resp. 1-5: 1, 2/6/84). More precisely, in this lay leader's view, Pe. Timothy's failure to act has inhibited the spiritual, political, and organizational evolution of the CEB. There is little moreover, Eduardo stated, which the membership alone can do to rectify the situation.

Certainly CEB members have made almost no effort to seek institutional support beyond the immediate area. The comunidade has never for example, sent representatives to CEB-related conferences. While moreover, informal contact is

maintained with other parish lay groups, this is usually restricted to co-participation in ceremonial or festive functions.

Paróquia Nossa Senhora das Graças

Our next two CEBs are located within the parish of Nossa Senhora das Graças. Like the one previously examined, this is a predominantly lower-class parish, where few resident families (12%) earn more than 12 MS per month. In terms of population however, it is somewhat larger, with nearly 150,000 inhabitants, nearly one and one-half times as many as in São Gabriel.

The parish pastor is Pe. Fernando, a 45 year-old Italian who is a member of the Congregação dos Missionários de São Carlos. Pe. Fernando has been in the parish since 1980, but has spent most of his 16 years in Brazil working among the lower-classes in other similar areas.

Where the CEBs are concerned, this pastor is clearly on line with Archdiocesan teaching. The groups, he states quite unequivocally, help the people:

to organize, to perceive reality, take consciousness of the world, how it is made; consciousness of class and the class struggle; and to open their eyes and to defend and promote the interests of the poor (Int. SA-2, 2/11/84).

But in spite of his enthusiasm, Pe. Fernando has established only limited contact with the groups in his parish. He

claims merely to offer them his moral support so as to maintain their momentum.

The relatively small number of CEBs, and especially of new CEBs, in the area perhaps attests to Pe. Fernando's lack of direct involvement with the groups. There are, to be specific, only 8 CEBs in Nossa Senhora das Graças, most of which were initiated long before Pe. Fernando's arrival.

Comunidade Santa Maria

Background Characteristics: One of the oldest CEBs in the area is the Comunidade Santa Maria, which was formed in 1971. Currently, this CEB has about 35 to 40 members, most of whom (77%) are between 30 to 49 years of age, and most of whom (60%) are women. Though an essentially lower-class group, members' families are slightly better off than those within the immediate area, with just 40 percent in the lowest income bracket of 5 MS or under.

Goals and Activities: The Comunidade Santa Maria was first begun to provide religious services to the local population in the form of the celebrações. Since its inception, the CEB has however, broadened its objectives considerably, and currently engages in a number of religious and secular activities.

Along with the development of such interests, there has also arisen substantial division within the CEB with

respect to group goals. This division was first encountered when prominent members were asked about the overall purpose or orientation of their CEB. One group leader named Rogério replied that the group was in essence a 'mini-parish', with nearly all the religious functions of a real, full-scale parish. Another however, Mauro, took issue with this interpretation, claiming that the purpose of the group was evangelization in the broadest sense which, in his view, necessarily consisted of both a religious, and a secular sociopolitical component (Resps. 1-6: 1, 3/3/84; 1-6: 2, 3/3/84).

Ordinary group members, for their part, appear to have lined up on either side of this debate. On the one hand, there are those who wish to see the group follow a strictly religious path, and agree fundamentally with the 'mini-parish' view offered by Rogério. On the other hand, there are those who would like the group to adopt a more radical stance, as advocated by Mauro.

One of the major factors exacerbating the split within the CEB is Mauro's membership in the Partido dos Trabalhadores (Workers' Party), under whose banner he recently ran for state deputy (congressman). CEB members who maintain strong institutional links are extremely uncomfortable with such an affiliation, since it technically violates Church proscriptions against the CEBs' direct involvement in politics (see Chapter II). Mauro himself by

contrast, saw his dual loyalties as causing little difficulty, and claimed to be unconcerned as to whether or not the curia approved or disapproved of his party connections. In fact, he added, he had recently helped to form a Regional council of Workers' Party members active in the CEBs, in open defiance of the hierarchy (Resp. 1-6: 2, 3/3/84).

According to observers from other CEBs, tensions within the Comunidade Santa Maria have currently reached such proportions that many of the more religiously conservative members have actually withdrawn from group activities. One such observer explained the situation this way. "There is a problem," he offered:

with political parties within the group. The fight began when they introduced politics into the mass. This weakened everything. Many people just stayed away [after that], (Resp. 1-7: 1, 5/13/84).

Despite these reports of mass 'defections', it would appear that the religious traditionalists within the CEB are far from a waning presence, and still in fact maintain the upper hand over more politically oriented members. This becomes evident if we look at the range and scope of specific religious and political activities offered by the group.

If we first examine the CEB's more religiously oriented functions for example, it becomes apparent that the group does indeed resemble a 'mini-parish'. CEB members prepare and offer weekly celebrações, and occasionally

perform baptisms and even weddings. Charity work is also a regular group activity, as is Bible study and group reflection. In addition, the CEB offers religious instruction classes for the young, and frequently plans festivals to mark holy days.

The political involvement of the Comunidade Santa Maria by contrast, is rather weak. Political consciousness-raising for instance, is a group activity, but is attempted primarily through the weekly celebrações. The CEB moreover, only occasionally participates in neighbourhood improvement projects (revindicações), and has almost never done so on its own. Projects designed to obtain streetlights, water, sewers, paving and bus service (representing the CEB's major revindicações to date), have invariably been carried out under the leadership of other neighbouring CEBs.

Organizational Structure: Despite ideological differences among the membership, the Comunidade Santa Maria does maintain viable organizational and decision-making structures. Within the CEB, there are, first of all, a number of sub-groups or courses oriented toward carrying out the group's various functions. Currently operational are a baptism preparation group, a charitable group (Vincentinos), a youth circle, as well as a theology and religious training course. All of these meet on a weekly basis, with the

exception of the baptism group which convenes only as necessary.

There are no specific groups or meetings held for mass preparation, Bible study, reflection, or political consciousness-raising. The latter three activities are however attempted during the CEB's weekly celebrações, which are conducted by one or more of the group's four lay ministers. The celebrações are open to all area residents, and are held in the CEB's community centre. This structure was built by the membership on land donated by the central curia. In preparing the celebrações, the lay ministers work together informally with other interested CEB members. They also rely however, on a liturgical pamphlet. Normally, Todos Irmãos is used, contrary, (as we saw in the case of the Comunidade São José), to the stated desires of the Regional bishop.

The group's conselho is exclusively lay-composed, and consists of the leaders of the various sub-groups, the lay ministers, and any interested others. Neither the parish pastor, Pe. Fernando, nor any other religious personnel currently serve as conselho members or advisors. The conselho meets once a month to hear reports on sub-group activities, and group finances, or to discuss various matters as they come up, such as the progress of revindicações, or the selection of the representatives for CEB-related conferences. The religious content of such encounters is

minimal, restricted only to an opening and closing prayer and or hymn.

As there are no meetings of the CEB per se, the decisions made by the conselho at its monthly meetings are final, and are merely communicated to the general membership at the close of the weekly celebrações. One lay leader defended this practice, by claiming that anyone who really wanted a say in the group could simply attend the conselho meetings. "The conselho," he stated matter-of-factly, "is the force behind the group. Whoever doesn't show up here, is simply not interested," (Resp. 1-6: 1, 3/3/84).

Institutional Relations: As was pointed out in the previous section, the Comunidade Santa Maria is exclusively lay-run, and maintains only tenuous links with the local hierarchy. Pe. Fernando rarely appears at conselho meetings or celebrações, not does he participate in group activities.

The lack of an institutional presence within the CEB is viewed with some ambivalence by group members. More religiously oriented types, such as Rogério, appear relatively unconcerned, perhaps because Pe. Fernando's absence provides enhanced opportunities for appropriating additional parish functions. More politically involved members however, are considerably more divided in their opinions. Mauro for instance, seemed to perceive the priest as a potential ally, who might help to stimulate the

political activation of the group. "We have no spiritual leader," he lamented; "the priest should be here, but he isn't; he's always too busy," (Resp. 1-6: 2, 3/3/84). By contrast, another CEB member and Workers' Party activist named Wilson was rather wary of enhanced institutional involvement with the CEB. The Church in general, he claimed, is a potentially negative force, in that it tends to exhibit politically retrogressive tendencies. This concern was clarified through the use of a 'horse and rider' analogy. "The Church," Wilson explained:

picks up the person from the ground and puts him on a horse. The horse and rider start to take off, but as soon as they pick up speed, the Church pulls back on the reins. [This is because] the ecclesial element must be maintained above all in the eyes of the Church (Resp. 1-6: 3, 2/26/84).

One direct result of the Catholic Church's attitude, he added, is the rising tide of violence currently occurring in many lower-class areas of São Paulo. Such violence, according to Wilson, is "caused by those who see the injustice, but are uneducated as to the means of righting the wrongs," (Resp. 1-6: 3, 2/26/84). The Church, in other words, while demonstrating the extent to which wrongdoing exists (as committed by politicians, multi-nationals, the police, etc.), has ill-prepared the people to take appropriate forms of collective political action.

Though institutionally unaccompanied, the Comunidade Santa Maria does maintain some links with its sister CEBs

with which it cooperates in undertaking the revindicações. To a certain extent, it also participates with CEBs and other lay circles in planning parish level activities, such as special religious services, socials, or festivals to commemorate holy days.

The comunidade has moreover, sent representatives to CEB conferences up to and including the state level. Group representatives though, it might be pointed out, have customarily been hard to come by. At one conselho meeting for example, calls for volunteers to attend an upcoming Regional encounter went all but unheeded, and the matter had to be shelved indefinitely until such time as someone stepped forward (Field notes, 1-6, 3/3/84).

Comunidade São Pedro

Background Characteristics: The next CEB to be examined within the Nossa Senhora das Gracas parish is the Comunidade São Pedro. This group is located in a favela (shantytown) not far from the CEB just examined. In this favela are some 400 to 450 wood and tin shacks, which have been constructed illegally on the slopes of a large ravine owned by the Municipality (FABES-SA, 1984).

The Comunidade São Pedro is approximately 5 years old, and is thus one of the newer groups in the parish. Most of its 15 to 20 members are quite young (62 percent are under

29 years of age), and just over half (57%) are male. Family incomes, as one might expect, are much lower than those within the general area. About 57 percent of members' families take home from 2 to 5 MS, while another 19 percent earn 2 MS or less.

Goals and Activities: The Comunidade São Pedro maintains reasonably well-developed religious and political functions. As in the Comunidade Santa Maria however, CEB members are often at odds over which type of activity is deserving of more attention. Division within the group first surfaced during preliminary encounters with ordinary members who flatly denied that their CEB was involved with anything even remotely political. Group leaders, for their part, adamantly rejected this view, yet they did admit the existence of a substantial element within the CEB which is interested only in prayer (Field notes, 1-7, 2/16/84).

Just as in the Comunidade Santa Maria moreover, this religiously conservative cohort appears to be holding sway over more politically involved participants, judging at least from the differential emphasis placed by the CEB on certain types of group activities. Within the religious sphere for example, group members are regularly engaged in preparing celebrações, religious instruction, baptismal preparation, reflection, and charity work.

The CEB's political activities by contrast, are somewhat less evolved. Political consciousness-raising is undertaken, but only during the celebrações. In addition, none of the group's major revindicações, such as for daycare, street widening, and land registry, have failed. Some progress has been made in obtaining running water and street lights, but actions initiated to secure these services were undertaken in conjunction with other neighbouring groups. The only successful project of a political nature instigated by the CEB itself is perhaps a literacy course which it offers free of charge to area residents.

Organizational Structure: Leadership and organizational structure within the Comunidade São Pedro is quite well developed, although along lines somewhat different from that of the CEBs previously examined. As compared with most other groups on the periphery in fact, the Comunidade São Pedro is quite unique, as it is largely the product of a group of lay missionaries originating outside of the immediate area. These individuals are associated with a lay movement known as MEAC (Missionaries for the Evangelization and Activation of Communities).

Mario, the first of such missionaries to arrive in the neighbourhood, used outside funding to construct a daycare centre for the children of the favelados. The centre quickly closed however, stated Mario, since no local

volunteers could be found to staff it. Consequently, the MEAC group decided to turn the hall into a community centre, and worked to interest local residents in forming their own CEB.

As the CEB grew, a few of its more active members eventually joined in the work of the original MEAC association. Sufficient interest was engendered in fact, so as to justify the formation of an indigenous missionary group, known simply as MAC (Missionaries for the Activation of Communities). It is this MAC group, which now has about 7 to 10 members, which currently forms the conselho of the Comunidade São Pedro.

Each of the MAC members takes responsibility for directing one of the CEB's many sub-groups or teams. All in all there are separate circles for fund-raising, liturgy, religious instruction and charity work (Vincentinos). The comunidade also possesses a mothers' club, and holds literacy training and tailoring classes. There are however, no specific groups for reflection, or political consciousness-raising. These last two activities are attempted only during the group's weekly celebrações.

These celebrações are performed each Sunday at the CEB's community centre, and are open to all area residents. Services are usually offered by one or more of the group's four lay ministers, all of whom are MAC personnel. In preparing the celebrações, these individuals are aided by the

Comunidade São Pedro's liturgy team. They also rely however, on the liturgical pamphlet, Povo de Deus em São Paulo (People of God in São Paulo). In contrast to the CEBs discussed earlier, their choice of liturgical aids thus conforms to the Regional bishop's desires.

The celebrações, it should be added, provide the only point of direct contact between the conselho and the regular membership, as there are no general meetings of the CEB per se. Normally, information is simply passed along to group members at the close of weekly services with a minimum of discussion.

Institutional Relations: No religious personnel have ever been involved with the CEB or its activities, and consequently the group's ties to the Church are rather weak. There is moreover, some evidence to suggest that the lay missionaries who control the Comunidade São Pedro maintain a keen interest in preserving the status quo in this regard. A conselho member related for example that group leaders had recently become alarmed by the presence of a group of nuns who, it was claimed, had indicated a desire to affiliate themselves with the work of the CEB. The conselho, stated the informant, immediately communicated its displeasure with the nuns' request to the Regional curia, and sought assurances from the bishop that the sisters would cease to 'harass' the CEB.

Despite its unsubstantial links with members of hierarchy, the Comunidade São Pedro does regularly attempt to strengthen its affiliation with CEBs and other lay groups within and outside the Nossa Senhora das Gracas parish. This occurs partly through its presence at official CEB conferences (so far it has attended meetings from the sectoral through to the state level), but primarily takes place as a function of its active missionizing activity in the Region. Each year for example, two individuals are elected by the conselho to work with lay groups in other parishes as representatives of MAC. Last year, the MAC personnel were sent to strengthen CEB activity within the Comunidade São Judas, located in São Paulo's southern reaches. So as to provide an accurate portrait of how such lay missionizing activity occurs, we have chosen to describe this CEB, and the MAC emissaries' involvement with it, in detail below.

Comunidade São Judas (Paróquia Santa Isabel)

Background Characteristics: The Comunidade São Judas is situated in a small rural village in the parish of Santa Isabel. In terms of its physical size, Santa Isabel is by far the largest parish in Santo Amaro; yet it is also one of the most sparsely populated with just 40,000 inhabitants. It is moreover the poorest parish in the Region, as fully 83

percent of resident families report earnings of 5 MS or less.

Santa Isabel parish is administered by a 42 year-old Italian priest named Pe. Angelo, who has worked in the area for well over 10 years. Pe. Angelo is a firm CEB supporter, and holds no illusions about the role of religious personnel such as himself in the group formation process. The CEBs, he states "feel more secure in my presence; I keep them alive," (Int. SA-6, 5/24/84). Due to the sheer size of the parish, he claims however to have had considerable difficulty in actually stimulating CEB growth. There are currently, Pe. Angelo points out, only 11 CEBs in Santa Isabel, most of which have been in existence for 5 years or more.

It was to aid Pe. Angelo in his attempts to promote CEB formation in the parish that lay missionaries from the Comunidade São Pedro first arrived in mid 1983. As we stated previously, they chose to begin their work in the Comunidade São Judas which, in various forms, has been in existence for approximately 15 years. Currently, the CEB has about 40 to 50 members of all ages, most of whom are women, and all of whom are poor.

Goals and Activities: Traditionally, the comunidade has engaged in a small number of strictly religious activities, and little has in fact changed in this respect since the arrival of the MAC missionaries. In recent months however, somewhat greater emphasis has been placed on more innovative,

as opposed to traditional religious undertakings. Although reflection is not yet regularly practiced for example, members are now involved in preparing weekly celebrações, and have begun to offer their own baptism preparation and religious instruction classes. More conventional functions, such as Bible study or charity work are undertaken less and less, although religious festivals or socials are still sometimes planned.

Organizational Structure: Under the guidance of the MAC personnel, a number of improvements have been made to the organizational and leadership structure of the CEB. A handful of teams for example, have been recently formed to carry out the principle activities of the group. In addition, there are now separate circles for young people, and for maintenance of the CEB's community centre, a somewhat dilapidated chapel overlooking the local village.

The MAC missionaries have also provided the Comunidade São Judas with lay ministers as necessary to conduct celebrações. These are held on the first three Sundays of each month. Ostensibly, these services are prepared by the CEB's liturgy team, although celebrants appear to rely heavily upon a liturgical pamphlet. As in most other groups in the general area, Todos Irmãos is invariably used.

On the fourth Sunday of each month, Pe. Angelo himself arrives to say mass, and to preside over the monthly encounters of the CEB's conselho. In addition to Pe. Angelo, the group's central directorate includes the leaders of the various teams or sub-groups, and virtually all of the personnel from MAC. Meetings tend to be brief and strictly businesslike, and are used primarily to discuss the state of group finances, sub-group activities, or upcoming special events. Since there are no scheduled meetings of the CEB per se, all decisions taken by the conselho moreover, are simply passed along to the membership during the celebrações.

Institutional Relations: In many ways, the Comunidade São Judas would appear to maintain rather limited ties with the institutional Church. The group's recent history, as was pointed out, really only began with the arrival of the lay missionaries from the Comunidade São Pedro. Their apparent objective has been to re-shape the Comunidade São Judas into a near carbon-copy of their own CEB which, as we saw, is operated with a minimum of ecclesial control.

A major force maintaining the CEB's institutional links is however Pe. Angelo, who considers himself officially responsible for the group. As the CEB's spiritual director, Pe. Angelo is somewhat wary about the involvement of the MAC personnel with the comunidade's participants. Basically, he believes that the lay missionaries have emphasized purely

religious concerns at the expense of more down-to-earth political ones, and have thus failed to act in the spirit of the São Paulo Church's 'preferential option for the poor'. Commenting on Mario for example, the leader of the MAC group, he stated:

I only wish he would clear up his purpose a little more. He speaks a lot about Christ, about Jesus, about God, but he has to involve himself more in political action (Int. SA-6, 5/24/85).

In comparison to the MAC personnel, Pe. Angelo has indeed adopted a much more explicitly political stance, and regularly attempts to stimulate community action through his monthly sermons. One Sunday for instance, he endeavoured to give local residents a sense of identity and pride in their class:

[This place] is in the sticks, half forgotten so far from downtown, but many people work there, helping the city to function. They are part of the social fabric of the city. Yet, you know that a doctor can kill dozens, and nothing will happen to him. But if one of us goes to Santo Amaro and even leans on an automobile, we are thrown in jail (Field notes, 1-8, 5/27/84).

His closing remarks moreover, were oriented towards interesting CEB members in launching their own revindicação:

The city has constructed a road right in front of the church, on our land, which was donated by the Alves family. Maybe it wouldn't help any, but we could react against this, and fight the city hall. Perhaps we should also close in church property, and build a wall and gate to prevent people from abusing it (Field notes, 1-8, 5/27/84).

Pe. Angelo himself admits though, that his overall strategy may do little to effect the politicization of CEB

members. Because of his numerous commitments in other parts of the parish, he claims, he is simply in the area too infrequently to offer anything more than occasional verbal encouragement to community action (Int. SA-6, 5/24/84).

Aside, finally, from the contact which the Comunidade São Judas maintains with Pe. Angelo, there appear to be no other means by which the CEB could become more politically involved. The group is rarely in contact with other similar groups because of its rather isolated location, and has never sent representatives to official CEB conferences sponsored by the hierarchy.

Part II: Região São Miguel

In this section, we shall examine another group of lower-class CEBs, all of which are located in the Episcopal Region of São Miguel. Situated on the eastern flank of the Archdiocese, this Region has a population of approximately 1.9 million, and is territorially divided into 7 sectors and 23 parishes. An essentially lower-class Region, fully 79 percent of its inhabitants live in semi-urban neighbourhoods of homogeneous ranks 7 and 8. The remaining 21 percent are resident in somewhat more affluent urban areas of rank 6 (Emplasa, 1982: 77; GESP, 1977: 5).

In terms of its basic social and physical characteristics, São Miguel thus closely resembles the Santo

Amaro Episcopal Region described in Part I of this Chapter. With respect to patterns of CEB emergence and growth however, São Miguel has little in common with its sister Region to the southwest. In 1983 for example, there were 120 CEBs reported to be operating within the Region, nearly twice as many as in Santo Amaro. Where moreover, the number of CEBs has been falling in this latter Region over the past few years, in São Miguel it has been increasing dramatically (see Chapter III, Table 3.1).

Differences in the quality of religious personnel working in the two Regions perhaps offer a partial clue as to why the CEB phenomenon in São Miguel is evolving at a more rapid pace. While for instance, both Regions possess roughly equal proportions of Brazilian to foreign-born pastors, at 52 and 58 percent for Santo Amaro and São Miguel respectively, the mean age of pastors in the latter Region, at 43, is considerably below that of the former, at 49. Some 65 percent of pastors in São Miguel moreover, received their religious training in the socially progressive wake of Vatican II, as opposed to just 50 percent in Santo Amaro (CERIS, 1977; Guia Geral, 1983). Thus, the religious personnel in São Miguel, because of their youth and training, are conceivably somewhat better prepared and able than their Santo Amaro counterparts to promote CEB formation.

Dissimilarities in CEB-related attitudes and behaviour between the chief administrators of Santo Amaro and

São Miguel also help account for differences in CEB growth rates in the two Regions. Where Santo Amaro bishop Dom Antonio Gaspar appears to have discouraged the development of the groups in his Region, in São Miguel, Bishop Angélico Sândalo Bernardino has assertively stimulated CEB activation.

Dom Angélico, who is some 51 years of age, has been both an auxiliary bishop, and administrator of São Miguel Region since 1975. The son of a factory worker from the interior of São Paulo state, he was originally trained as a journalist, and has successfully managed to combine a penchant for writing with more pastoral duties since his ordination as priest in 1959. Currently, he is director-in-chief of both the Archdiocesan newspaper O São Paulo, and the popular liturgical pamphlet, Povo de Deus em São Paulo. Aside from these, and other purely administrative duties within his Region, Dom Angélico is also responsible for the Archdiocesan Workers' Pastoral, and is president of the CNBB's South 1 Region.

Unlike his more conservative counterpart in Santo Amaro, Dom Angélico has embraced the Church's 'preferential option for the poor' with extreme passion, and is an outspoken defender of the lower-classes. In a recent article published in the Regional newspaper Grita Povo (Cry of the People) for example he attributed the misery of the poor, employing rather dramatic imagery, to a new kind of atomic bomb:

It happens however, that the greatest exploiters of the world built another kind of bomb, as terrible as many atomic bombs put together. Daily, this bomb explodes, above all, in the countries of the Third World. It kills our children in a special way, with refined cruelty...I am referring to the M Bomb, the Bomb of Misery, fruit of the sinful System that oppresses us, whose manifestations are unemployment, hunger, lack of housing, of land, illiteracy, prostitution and similar calamities ('Campanha da Fraternidade', 1984).

As to who is responsible for the people's plight in Brazil, Dom Angélico is extremely candid, and points the finger directly at those he calls 'international and national criminals'. The international criminals are the United States and the multi-national companies which control the Brazilian economy. The national criminals are those who let them, i.e. the generals, to whom he has collectively referred as "this agonizing military movement which unfortunately has not yet died," ('Para dom Angélico', 1984), and as "those persons who are eternally in power, and who shamelessly exploit the people," ('Fraternidade', 1984).

The role of the Church in altering what is a profoundly unjust situation, claims Dom Angélico, is clear. It must help to change the status quo in Brazil and thus help the poor to obtain their rightful place in Brazilian society. "In the past," the bishop explains,

the Church gave out fish. Now the Church wants to teach the people how to fish, but the river, like our own Rio Tietê, is polluted. Thus, the Church has to clean up the river, change its course, to allow the faithful to fish (Int. SM-1, 3/2/84).

One of the principal ways in which the Church attempts to effect such a transformation, says Dom Angelico, is through the CEBs. The groups, in his view, are in fact "precious diamonds" offering,

a new way to be Church, in which the people really share their lives, their hopes, in search of new paths to liberation in light of the Gospel (Int. SM-1, 3/2/84).

In addition, the CEBs "create a critical consciousness [among the people], and allow them to prevent their own manipulation by national and international scoundrels," (Int. SM-1, 3/2/84). In order to achieve their overall goal of societal transformation, Dom Angélico warns however that the CEBs must remain alert and open, and must actively "fight for change." The conscientized Christian, he adds, must carry this fight beyond his or her own CEB, and into the political parties and popular movements of the nation (Int. SM-1, 3/2/84).

To stimulate CEB activation in the Region, Dom Angelico utilizes three basic methods. First of all, he has encouraged the decentralization of the Region through the reorganization of traditional parish structure. On the periphery, this has meant that the parish church has had to give up to the CEBs many of the functions which it alone had previously offered. The ideal parish should thus become simply a network of CEBs, coordinated by the mother church at the centre. The CEBs themselves have been directed by the curia to encourage the formation of small sub-groups known as

grupos de rua (street groups). These small cells, organized to facilitate reflection and political consciousness-raising at an informal level, are to be the seeds of new CEBs, which in turn are to form still more grupos de rua, as part of an endless dialectical process. In smaller, middle-class parishes where the CEBs are comparatively few, the bishop has encouraged pastors and parishoners to think of the parish itself as a mother CEB, from which grupos de rua can be organized and coordinated.

The second method of CEB promotion adopted by Dom Angélico involves the central coordination of sectoral and Regional CEB encounters. As in most other Regions, the purpose of such meetings is to facilitate an exchange of views among and between CEB participants and the hierarchy on matters of Church policy. In São Miguel however, these conferences tend to take on a somewhat dramatic and theatrical aura, especially when Dom Angélico himself is present, and serve in effect as a form of 'pep rally' for local CEB members.

At the official opening of the CNBB's Campanha da Fraternidade (Campaign of Fraternity) for example, in March of 1984, Dom Angélico offered a special mass at the Church of São Miguel Arcanjo adjoining the Regional curia. This service was attended by CEB representatives from throughout the Region, each of whom arrived carrying a small cross with the name of their CEB inscribed upon it. Opening the

ceremony, Dom Angélico entered the packed church dragging a large wooden crucifix, made from tree limbs. Each point of the cross, he explained upon reaching the altar, represented the major priorities of the Region, which had been selected at a previous Regional encounter. "The head," he stated,

represents the workers, exploited by national and international thieves; the left side represents women, who are terribly discriminated against in our Region...The other is for abandoned minors...[and] the bottom represents the exploited people of the neighbourhoods of São Miguel (Field notes, SM, 3/11/84).

Later in the service (which was conducted following the liturgical pamphlet Povo de Deus em São Paulo), the bishop openly attacked the repressive policies of Brazil's military rulers and their civilian 'co-conspirators'. At one point, he decried what he claimed was the widespread misuse of public property, and invited those without land of their own to simply seize what rightfully belonged to them:

There are 17 million square metres of empty land in the Municipality of São Paulo...Millions are held by the thieves of the Federal Government who are robbing the people...Millions are held by the thieves of the State Government who are robbing the people...Millions are held by the thieves of the Municipal Government who are robbing the people! (Field notes, SM, 3/11/85).

Following the formal part of the ceremony, the bishop led all in the church on a march through the streets of São Miguel Paulista, the site of the Regional curia. The crowd stopped a total of 7 times during the two-hour procession, each time to listen to speeches prepared by CEB participants

from the 7 sectors of the Region. The subjects dealt with were not religious, but explicitly political. Specifically mentioned were: 1) the oppressed peoples of Latin America; 2) abandoned minors; 3) the plight of women; 4) youth-related problems; 5) exploitation of workers; 6) racial discrimination; and 7) exploited people in general in São Miguel.

The third and final way in which Dom Angélico attempts to promote CEB activation in the Region is through the publication of highly politicized documents. These are produced by the Regional Centro de Comunicações e Educação Popular de São Miguel (Centre of Communications and Popular Education of São Miguel). The Centre's headquarters are located in a small house adjoining the Regional curia, and are staffed by a team of local volunteers. Inside the building are numerous posters, primarily from Nicaragua, expressing revolutionary slogans. Drawings of Che Guevara and other Latin American popular heroes are also prominently displayed.

The Centre publishes various newsletters and bulletins, including for example, the Regional weekly, Grita Povo (Cry of the People). This paper provides information about the activities of CEBs, popular movements, political issues, women's problems, and so forth, at the Regional level and beyond. Besides Grita Povo, other bulletins are

regularly prepared for popular movements active in São Miguel. The Movimento Contra Desemprego (Movement Against Unemployment) for instance, prints and distributes its own Dê Olho no Desemprego (Eye on Unemployment) using the Centre's facilities.

For specific use in the CEBs, the Centre has prepared a number of instructive documents. For example, one small booklet, entitled Sou Mulher (I am Woman) (1983) outlines the plight of women in the Region. Another, Desafio à Igreja de Jesus Cristo (Challenge to the Church of Christ) (1984) explains the role of the Church in Latin American liberation movements.¹¹ The Centre has also published an untitled series of booklets which explain Marx's history of class struggle using cartoons and flow-charts.

One of the most contentious documents prepared by the Centro de Comunicações was recently released in conjunction with the CNBB's 1984 Campanha da Fraternidade. Its title, in keeping with the theme of the campaign, is Para Que Todos Tenham Vida (So That All May Have Life) (1984). Generally speaking, the document seeks to explain, using popular language, how it is that certain individuals are denied life in contemporary Latin America and Brazil in particular. It is a highly political publication, and makes no attempt at providing alternative explanations to the extremely controversial ones offered. Using Marxist terminology, the

history of Latin America for example, is described quite matter-of-factly in the following manner:

Christopher Columbus arrived in America in 1492, and since this date, Spain, Portugal, and England have dominated everything around here. They enslaved and killed the Indians and the blacks.

Today, it is the United States which exploits the peoples of Latin America. The Americans make an alliance with industrialists, bankers, generals, and ranchers of the Latin American countries and only look after their own interests, to the detriment of an impoverished multitude.

The United States sucks the natural riches of our countries and foments hunger and death in Latin America.

But Latin America will never surrender. Over 20 years ago Cuba liberated itself from American imperialism. In July of 1979, it was Nicaragua's turn. Because of this, the United States wants to invade Nicaragua.

At the end of last year, the Americans invaded the tiny island of Grenada. They used millions of dollars to stop the liberation of El Salvador. Last year, they massacred, each month, 1200 Indians in Guatemala. The Americans do not want to lose their dominion over Latin America, and so they carefully plan the death of our people (Para Que Todos Tenham Vida, 1984: 6-7).

As might be expected, documents such as those cited above, and indeed Dom Angélico's entire strategy for CEB activation, have created a good deal of controversy in the Region. Some lay and religious personnel are clearly 'on line' with the bishop's thinking, and support him stalwartly. As one CEB leader observed:

In a certain way, he sees things the way he wants to see them, since he is a man of faith. He has annoyed many people...but no one has fought on the side of the people, on the side of the laity more than he has...His language is strong, and must be strong, because this is our reality (Resp. 3-5: 2, 4/15/85).

A nun working with CEBs in a southern area of São Miguel, claimed similarly that the bishop's position is justified since he is only expressing the view of CEB members in the Region. The opinions stated, she said, are those of the people, and are arrived at systematically at Regional encounters. For example, "the material in the subsidiary texts," it was explained,

is produced by the people from the comunidades, and so comes therefore from the grassroots. The pastoral themes of the Region [detailed therein] were chosen democratically at the Regional encounter at Itaici in 1983 (Int. 3-5: 1, 5/7/84).

Many in São Miguel however, are concerned about Dom Angelico's highly politicized tone and actions. An Italian nun working in the Region related for example, that many foreign priests have taken personnel offence because of the bishop's ardent anti-imperialist, nationalistic rhetoric. Such personnel, she claimed, have to accept his particular worldview, or risk being ostracized (Field notes, SM, 3/11/84). A Spanish priest later confirmed this assertion, saying that many of his countrymen are feeling threatened because their views on the CEBs and political action in general do not coincide with those of Dom Angelico. Referring to the bishop as a demagogue, he confessed:

I know my days are numbered. The attitude taken by the bishop has served to marginalize many priests like myself who have adopted a humanist, as opposed to a strictly socialist stance (Int. SM-8, 3/27/84).

Religious personnel also see problems arising within

the CEBs themselves as a result of the over-politicization of the Region. The same priest quoted above complained that the bishop's radicalism is being forced down the people's throats. Consequently, the groups are able to explore few options other than those dictated by the Region. "The CEBs," he explained,

are forced to use the materials sent by the curia. Dom Angélico says that if they don't want to use them, they can make up their own. But, I ask you, with what resources can they do this? (Int. SM-8, 3/27/84).

Another pastor, in a more affluent middle-class parish, noted that CEB formation in his area had been retarded due to the rhetoric emanating from the Regional curia. "In the middle-class groups," he related, "the theme is not political. They just don't know how to deal with the radical message of Dom Angélico," (Int. SM-6, 3/15/84).

Material released by the curia itself indicates moreover, that Dom Angélico's overall strategy has had little or no effect on the more mundane problems associated with the evolution of the CEB phenomenon. Among the most frequently mentioned difficulties, as cited in a Regional publication entitled Estamos em assembléia (We Are in Assembly) (1983), are the following:

1. Stimulation of base nuclei (grupos de rua)
2. The need for increased presence on the part of religious personnel.
3. Inadequate training of local leaders and poor organization of conselhos.

4. The need for more participation in the revindicações.
5. The need for a greater male presence in the CEBs.

Somewhat similar difficulties, it will be recalled, were reported to be negatively affecting CEB growth in Santo Amaro Region. One might conclude therefore, that even though Regional strategy might be highly effective in the short run in São Miguel (as indicated by the currently high CEB growth rate), the possibilities for long term CEB stability in the Region may be limited.

Paróquia Nossa Senhora das Dores

The first two CEBs to be examined in São Miguel Region are located in the parish of Nossa Senhora das Dores. This is a rather large parish, with some 300,000 inhabitants, and is situated on the eastern edge of the Region, well into the periphery.

The parish is administered by some 10 religious and diocesan priests who are dispersed throughout its territory. In charge of these personnel is Pe. Franco, a 37 year-old Brazilian-born former labour lawyer, who has been working in the area for about 6 years.

In terms of his political attitudes, Pe. Franco resembles what many would call the consummate 'red' priest. For Pe. Franco, the will of the people is inviolable, and he claimed he would approve of any means whatsoever which the

poor might choose to overthrow their oppressors, including armed revolution. As a testament to such beliefs, in his office are hung posters of armed Nicaraguan revolutionaries, and an artist's drawing of Che Guevara holding a machine gun with a bullet belt strung across one shoulder.

In his interpretation of the CEBs, Pe. Franco follows a strictly neo-Marxist line. "The CEBs," he claimed,

attempt to realize and confront their class position, their common situation. The aim is to perceive their common enemy [which is] American imperialism and capitalism, although not the American people per se (Int. SM-5, 1/29/84).

As regards his role in CEB formation, Pe. Franco is rather humble. It is reality he asserted, and not his personal initiative which has done the most to stimulate the CEB phenomenon in his parish. Interestingly enough however, while the reality of everyday life in Nossa Senhora das Dores has changed little for 10 years or more, 15 of the 22 CEBs currently in operation were formed less than 5 years ago, after Pe. Franco's arrival. This clearly suggests that the priest has at least in some way had a hand in CEB activation.

Comunidade São Rafael

Background Characteristics: One of the newer CEBs in the parish is the Comunidade São Rafael. Begun some two years ago, it is located in a rather typical lower-class neighbourhood adjacent to a large municipal park. Many families in the area are extremely poor, with fully 46

percent earning 2 MS or less. Another 25 percent subsist on between 3 and 5 MS.

The CEB currently has about 40 regular members, half of whom are under 30 years of age, and the majority of whom (65%) are women. Family earnings within the group tend to mirror those of families in the general area, with some two-thirds in the 5 MS and under salary range.

Goals and Activities: From its inception, the group has been actively engaged in both religious and political activities, with perhaps somewhat greater emphasis on the latter. As one group member explained, the group was begun because "we were isolated. There was no fixation to start a church, but to facilitate a progress: lights, water, and so forth," (Resp. 3-5: 2, 3/24/84).

The political activities of the CEB are indeed quite well developed, and are widely supported within the group. Political consciousness-raising for example, is a regular function conducted not only through weekly celebrações, but in numerous small cells known as grupos de rua as well. CEB members are also involved in the São Miguel Regional Health Pastoral, which was formed by the curia with the aim of improving community health care standards. Finally, the Comunidade São Rafael has been intensely active in the revindicações. Though barely 2 years old, the group has already successfully launched a number of actions designed to

obtain streetlights, garbage pick-up, road paving, schools, and the return of a local street fair. (Somewhat ironically, the local street fair was recently moved because of the lack of pavement in the area).

In spite of the CEB's rather intense political involvement, religious activities do not, by comparison, appear to have suffered to any great extent. Members help to prepare weekly celebrações, and occasional christenings. Religious instruction, Bible study, and reflection are also undertaken, and festivals frequently organized in celebration of religious holidays. Charity work, finally, is still another group function, although this usually takes the form of visits to the sick and disabled only.

Organizational Structure: On the whole, all group activities seem to be extremely well organized and directed. There are for instance, specific groups for religious instruction, young people, the Regional Health Pastoral, as well as ongoing faith enhancement and baptismal preparation courses. All such teams meet once a week at the CEB's community centre, an as yet unfinished structure being built by volunteers on property owned by the central curia.

Reflection and political consciousness-raising, as mentioned earlier, are facilitated through the Comunidade São Rafael's grupos de rua. Currently, there are some 10 of these circles which normally meet at various times throughout

the week at the home of individual members. Discussions normally centre around prepared materials sent from the Regional curia. At the bishop's behest, all such encounters are open not only to regular CEB members, but to all area residents, so that they too might become interested in the work of the comunidades.

Celebrações are held on a weekly basis and, as in most CEBs, may be attended by all local inhabitants. Because the group does not yet possess any lay ministers of its own, all such services are performed by the nun accompanying the group, Irmã Ofélia. Though sometimes aided informally by CEB members, Ofélia relies for the most part on a liturgical pamphlet. In accordance with Regional bishop Dom Angélico's wishes, Povo de Deus em São Paulo is used exclusively.

The revindicações, as a central group activity, are coordinated directly by the conselho. The strategy employed moreover, is identical to that used by other CEBs, such as those in Santo Amaro Region described in the previous section.

The conselho of the Comunidade São Rafael finally, is a rather large body consisting of Irmã Ofelia, and the 15 or so lay directors of the comunidade's various teams and grupos de rua. Somewhat unusually, the group's directorate has established no fixed meeting times. Instead, the conselho convenes only as its members deem necessary, to ensure the

continued smooth functioning of the sub-groups, to discuss group finances, or to deal with other matters as they arise.

Institutional Relations: The pastor of Nossa Senhora das Dores parish, Pe. Franco, has been involved but little with the Comunidade São Rafael. Since its inception, the group has however been closely supervised by Irmã Ofélia, a 34 year-old nun who has served in the parish for approximately 13 years.

Although a member of what she claims is a rather conservative order (Sisters of Santa Marcelina), Irmã Ofélia, like Pe. Franco, is a self-proclaimed radical, and is deeply committed to the CEBs as agents of social change. She described a typical CEB as "a group of people [who are] organized, possessing a consciousness [of society] and involved in its transformation, [and who are] oriented...by the Word of God." It is the Word of God, she further stressed, which is the real source of the CEBs' radical potential:

The Bible is a very revolutionary document, and if you accept the Word of God, you enter into politics, even without wanting to. When you are fighting for the common good, it is already political. It is a natural path (Int. 3-5: 1, 5/7/84).

But while they may agree on the nature of the CEBs' fundamental thrust, Ofélia and Pe. Franco are somewhat at odds where strategies for CEB activation are concerned. Where Pe. Franco lays claim to a desire to allow social

reality to take its course in stimulating CEB development, Irmã Ofélia believes that direct interference in group activities is both necessary and desirable. In her own CEB, the Comunidade São Rafael, this has meant shielding group members from 'undesirable influences' which, in Ofélia's view, emanate from both the right and the left of the political spectrum. So as to emphasize the pervasivity of such threats, Ofélia recounted her experiences with two groups in particular; the PC do B (Communist Party of Brazil) and a right-wing Church group known as TFP (Society for the Preservation of Tradition, Family, and Property):

One time, we tried to organize a favela, and soon after our arrival, some people from the PC do B showed up. Fortunately, the people rejected them, and they did not meet their objectives...The TFP has also tried to infiltrate the comunidades, showing slides of the Virgin Mary shedding tears for the sinners of the CEBs (Int. 3-5: 1, 5/7/84).

Lay leaders within the Comunidade São Rafael are quite well aware of Ofélia's preoccupations, and many in fact take issue with her attempts to block certain influences. One conselho member attempted to concretely demonstrate Ofélia's hold on the CEB by challenging the researcher to reveal his methodology for entering the group. "How is it that you managed to get into our group?" he inquired, and then himself offered the answer. "You went to Ofélia, didn't you, and then she brought you here." "Why didn't you come directly to us?" he asked finally, adding that it was because the researcher knew that such action would not have been

viewed favourably by Ofelia and could even have resulted in his expulsion (Resp. 3-5: 2, 4/15/84).¹²

According to two CEB leaders in particular, Ofélia's somewhat authoritarian attitude toward the Comunidade São Rafael is basically a reflection of her status as an official representative of the Church. Ofélia is merely expressing the view predominant within the hierarchy, they claimed, which itself refuses to allow the CEBs sufficient ideological breathing room. "The Church," explained one conselho member,

is still quite structured. The bishop bosses the priests, the priests boss the nuns, and the nuns boss the lay people; and lay people, they don't even boss a dog! (Resp. 3-5: 2, 4/15/84).

The other was somewhat more eloquent in his evaluation of relations between the CEBs and the hierarchy:

The Church, understand me well, is the only space for us to confront our problems here in Brazil. The Church gives space to the people, but only to a certain extent. But the Church should let ideas and influences enter the group, and then let the people decide if they want to act upon them or not (Resp. 3-5: 3, 4/15/84).

Aside from its close contact with Irmã Ofélia, the Comunidade São Rafael, finally, maintains fairly extensive intra-institutional linkages. The CEB does for example, regularly send representatives to CEB-related encounters, so far up to and including the state level. Locally, the comunidade participates with others in the Regional Health Pastoral, and in the revindicações. Opportunities for inter-CEB cooperation with regard to this latter activity are

usually provided during sectoral level CEB encounters. As one CEB member explained:

If it is a problem with this neighbourhood only, then we draw up the petition and start the process ourselves. In addition however, during sectoral meetings, all the comunidades discuss the problems that they all have in common, and afterwards get together to mount a joint campaign (Resp. 3-5: 3, 4/15/84).

Comunidade Santana

Background Characteristics: The next parish CEB which we shall investigate is the Comunidade Santana. This group is approximately 4 years old, and is located in an area similar to that of its sister CEB, the Comunidade São Rafael. Currently, the Comunidade Santana has about 40 members. Sixty-four percent of these are women, and about half are under 30 years of age. Members' family incomes, considering the locale, are rather high. Only 28 percent of participants reported monthly earnings of 5 MS or less, with the majority (57%) in the 5 to 10 MS range.

Goals and Activities: As do many of the CEBs considered thus far, the Comunidade Santana pursues a number of both political and religious aims. Principal religious activities include preparing local mass (which is actually said by the priest accompanying the group), charity work, religious instruction, Bible study, reflection, and occasional religious festivals. Baptisms or weddings are not performed,

nor are there training courses as in some other groups, to prepare individuals to take these two sacraments.

The CEB's political involvement appears at least, to be similarly well-rounded. Political consciousness-raising for instance, is carried out during the mass, in the CEB's grupos de rua, and at special membership meetings. Group participants have also engaged successfully in a number of revindicações, the most important of which have been for improved bus service in the area, better quality health-care, road paving, and sewers. In addition, the Comunidade Santana has recently taken control of a local ratepayers' association, integrating its functions with those of the CEB. This ratepayers' group is one of dozens in São Paulo known collectively as SABs (Friends of the Neighbourhood Societies). In essence, they are a type of citizens' complaint group, but possess little autonomy as they are funded, and closely monitored by the São Paulo city hall. More often than not, the SABs are simply used by politicians and bureaucrats to neutralize rather than stimulate public involvement. This is usually accomplished through careful dispensation of favours to members considered influential in the community. In taking over the neighbourhood SAB, the Comunidade Santana has sought to use its established ties with municipal politicians to promote the CEB's own revindicações. It has acted moreover, in accordance with the

wishes of Regional bishop Dom Angélico, who has expressed a desire to see the SABs become more authentic instruments of popular action (Resp. 3-7: 2, 4/5/84).

As in a number of other groups described earlier, such political activity is not, it should be pointed out, well received by all CEB members. The religious traditionalism of many participants, and the apathy of others, are in fact two major problems facing the Comunidade Santana; problems which CEB leaders claim have seriously hampered its effectiveness in nearly all areas of endeavour.

Organizational Structure: The situation in which the group finds itself is both manifested in, and partly attributable to, the poor quality of the CEB's leadership. The group does possess a democratically-chosen conselho (one of the few of its kind) which consists of the priest accompanying the CEB, Pe. Patrick, and 8 elected lay members. This directorate is however an extremely weak and ineffectual body. The fact that it functions at all is in large part attributable to the efforts of one lay leader in particular, named Benedita. Clearly recognizing her central role within the conselho, she herself has described the CEB's directorate thus:

This conselho is weak, without a brain. They accept whatever I suggest. 'Let's launch a youth group', I say for example, and they all think that's a great idea; but nobody actually participates, they leave all that up to me (Resp. 3-7: 2, 5/16/84).

The overall ineffectiveness of the conselho may be demonstrated in a number of ways. First of all, it has been unable to organize and sustain most of the sub-groups or teams responsible for carrying out group activities. The only groups which convene with any regularity are those for religious instruction, and for preparing the weekly mass. Women's and youth groups function only intermittently, as sufficient interest in them can be generated among the membership. In addition, the 9 or so grupos de rua formed by the conselho to stimulate reflection and consciousness-raising, meet only sporadically, or at special times of the year such as Christmas and Easter.

Secondly, the conselho has been unable to arouse member interest in the group's community centre. This structure was initiated about 2 years ago, but remains unfinished as neither local funding needed for construction materials, nor the volunteer labour of CEB members, has been forthcoming. Fortunately, through the efforts of Pe. Patrick, the group has been able to secure some outside support. Much of the money has so far gone however, to pay for a hired stonemason who has been working alone on the centre for over a year.

A third example of the conselho's weakness is demonstrated in its fundamental inability to stimulate interest or to effectively take the lead in carrying out the revindicações. What progress has been made by the CEB in the

neighbourhood appears to be largely attributable to the efforts of Benedita, who has taken sole responsibility for arranging meetings with officials, circulating petitions, and so forth. Recently for instance, the conselho had met and agreed upon lending material and spiritual support to a group of nearby favelados who wished to take over a publicly owned piece of land. When the time came for the invasion though, not one conselho member showed up; not one that is, except for Benedita. Furthermore, it was upon Benedita's own initiative that the local ratepayers' group or SAB, (of which she is also currently president), was appropriated by the CEB.

Finally, in spite of the group's relative maturity, the conselho has been unable to stimulate the formation of any lay ministers as yet. This deficiency is to some extent compensated for by the fact that the CEB does maintain a liturgical team which helps Pe. Patrick to prepare the weekly mass. This team moreover, does take a more active role in determining liturgical content than many others examined thus far. It has for example, spurned the use of liturgical pamphlets, and relies exclusively upon readily available materials, such as the Bible itself. As Benedita explained:

The people here do not use these pamphlets from the Region. Mostly, they cost money, which we don't have. We use the Bible. The people pick and discuss certain passages directly from the Bible (Resp. 3-7: 2, 5/16/84).

Member initiative in this area though, may simply be related to a distaste on the part of more religiously conservative participants for the explicitly political materials sent from the Regional curia.

Institutional Relations: As in the Comunidade São Rafael, parish pastor Pe. Franco is not himself directly involved with CEB activities. The comunidade is however closely monitored by Pe. Patrick, a 42 year-old diocesan priest from Ireland. Pe. Patrick has been working in Nossa Senhora das Dores parish for about 5 years.

The absence of Pe. Franco from the Comunidade Santana is rarely lamented by CEB members, according at least to Benedita. She herself has in fact little regard for the local pastor, and claims to see through his populist stance. "He wouldn't have lunch with us here," she reviled, "not even go into a bar and have a coffee with us. He talks a lot about the people, but he isn't one of us," (Resp. 3-7: 2, 5/9/84). Part of Benedita's contempt is related to Pe. Franco's reputed animosity for Pe. Patrick. Pe. Franco, she stated, "wants to remove him from the parish, because he is a foreigner," (Resp. 3-7: 2, 5/9/84).¹³

For his own part, Pe. Patrick claims to have no problems relating to his superior. Yet it is clear that his approach to the CEBs is quite different than that of Pe. Franco. His interpretation of the groups is for example,

considerably more subtle, and there is little talk of class consciousness or class struggle. "A CEB," Pe. Patrick stated quite simply, "has to be conscious of the locale, and of the reality of the country. They have to treat the whole person, and not just the religious part." Unlike Pe. Franco moreover, the priest envisions a strong role for religious personnel in the formation and development of the CEBs, and states categorically that "the people need leadership [and] trained personnel," (Int. 3-7: 1, 4/12/84).

One way in which Pe. Patrick offers such leadership to the Comunidade Santana is through the constant promotion of community action. During the Sunday mass for instance, he often attempts to 'knock some heads together', as Benedita put it, in order to awaken the flock. One Sunday, he offered this home-grown conclusion to the Biblical story of Lazarus:

Here in the Jardim Copacabana, people are living in the worst conditions. This place is already smelling like the tomb of Lazarus. It's not like [President] Figueiredo says. These conditions are inhuman, insupportable. People will have to take a stand, help each other. In doing so, they will be following Christ. People complain about the Church being too political, but we're talking about politics as the daily life of the people. The Church is political, so what of it? (Field notes, 3-7, 4/8/84).

In a manner similar to that of Irmã Ofelia (from the Comunidade São Rafael) moreover, Pe. Patrick tries to shield the group from undesirable or harmful influences. "I don't allow the comunidade to be used," he warned, "for specific

ends, be they political or personal," (Int. 3-7: 1, 4/12/84). In the period leading up to the General Elections of 1982, he claims to have demonstrated this intent by denying politicians from all political parties the right to speak to the congregation following Sunday mass. The researcher himself was similarly denied access to the group until such time as he had thoroughly discussed with the priest the nature and purpose of the study (Field notes, 3-7, 4/8/84). Even after Pe. Patrick's approval had been granted, many CEB members remained reluctant to speak to the researcher. So conditioned were they by the priest's stern authoritarianism that they stubbornly refused to cooperate until they had received his verbal permission (as per Resp. 3-7: 2, 5/9/84).

The Comunidade Santana's contacts with local Church groups or religious personnel other than Pe. Patrick, it should be added, are rare. The closest CEB is in fact located quite some distance away. The comunidade is however, regularly represented at sectoral and Regional CEB encounters. Not surprisingly perhaps, the group's permanent envoy to such meetings is Benedita.

Paróquia Verbo Divino

The parish of Verbo Divino is home to our next two CEBs. As compared with most other Church precincts on São Miguel's eastern perimeter, this is a relatively small parish, and has but 70 to 80,000 inhabitants. In keeping

with the general area though, it is predominantly semi-urban, and lower-class, with fully 85 percent of resident families earning 5 MS or under.

In charge of the parish is Pe. Miguel, a 40 year-old Spanish missionary, who has served in the area for about 4 years. Where the CEBs' potential is concerned, Pe. Miguel is somewhat ambivalent. On the one hand, he enthusiastically asserts that the groups bring "consciousness to the people [and] provide encouragement [for them] to get together in search of solutions, helping them to feel like children of God, like citizens." Yet, on the other hand he reluctantly admits a darker side to the phenomenon, pointing out that the CEBs are becoming overly subject to, and dependent upon, ecclesial control. "The CEBs," he warned,

are becoming [nothing more] than mini-parishes. The phenomenon is overly structured in the Archdiocese. The Church pushes and forces them. I would just ask you, without the Church, how long do you think they would survive? (Int. SM-8, 3/27/84).

Such preoccupations aside, Pe. Miguel does take an active role in CEB promotion. In this respect moreover, he shares little in common with his counterpart in neighbouring Nossa Senhora das Dores parish, Pe. Franco. "My role," Pe. Miguel stated, "is to find animators [potential lay leaders] and send them on their way. I also organize religious instruction classes [to teach people about the CEBs], and grupos de rua." The priest lamented however that the heavy

hand of the Regional curia has prevented him from developing additional techniques for CEB promotion. "I don't have much room for innovation," he complained; "the Region is the major force [behind group formation]," (Int. SM-8, 3/27/84).

Irrespective of precisely who provides the major thrust behind CEB promotion in Verbo Divino parish, the truth is that numerically the phenomenon is far from flourishing. Currently, there are just 6 CEBs in operation, all of which are less than 5 years old. In Pe. Miguel's view, it is religious traditionalism among his parishoners which has created the major obstacle to progress. "The people themselves don't respond," he offered, "they still want the traditional mass," (Int. SM-8, 3/27/84).

Comunidade Jaraguá

Background Characteristics: One of the 6 parish CEBs presently functioning is the Comunidade Jaraguá, which is about one and one-half years old. It is located some 2 kilometres east of the parish church in a lower-class neighbourhood similar to most others in the periphery. Currently, there are 20 to 30 regular participants in the CEB, nearly all of whom (81%) are under 30. Most (64%) moreover, are women, and no member's family earns more than 5 MS per month.

Goals and Activities: Group leaders claimed that the Comunidade Jaraguã was initially formed to alleviate a sense of physical and spiritual isolation felt by area residents. Accordingly, since its inception, the CEB has pursued both political ends, designed to enhance the quality of life in the neighbourhood, and religious ones, to bring its members closer to the community of God.

Group activities within either the religious or political spheres are not however, very well developed, due to what CEB leaders see as lingering traces of apathy and religious conservatism among the membership. In this respect then, the comunidade is little different from a number of others examined thus far.

The only religious functions regularly undertaken by the Comunidade Jaraguã are religious instruction, reflection, and the preparation of celebrações. Festivals or socials in commemoration of holy days are also planned, but only infrequently.

On the political side, consciousness-raising is claimed as a group function, but in actual fact is only irregularly practiced in a few grupos de rua, and during the celebrações. In addition, some revindicações have been carried out, but with little success, when compared at least with that enjoyed by other CEBs of similar age (such as for example the Comunidade São Rafael in Nossa Senhora das Dores parish). Of the group's four major projects to date, i.e.

for road paving, bus service, streetlights, and garbage pick-up, only this last service was actually obtained through group efforts alone. Streetlights admittedly, were installed shortly after the CEB launched a revindicação in mid 1984. As this was election time, it was never clear however, whether this service had been won through CEB's rather limited lobbying, or had simply been provided by local politicians as a vote-getting ploy (Field notes, 3-6, 3/24/84).

Organizational Structure: Owing to the limited range of activities actually undertaken, the organizational structure of the Comunidade Jaraguã is rather basic. Distinct, task-oriented teams or sub-groups for instance, exist only for religious instruction and young people. Aside from these, 3 or 4 grupos de rua are also reported to be operational, but most in fact convene only during special times of the year, such as Christmas and Easter, to discuss 'seasonal' material sent from the Regional curia.

Weekly celebrações are planned and performed single-handedly by José, the group's only lay minister. In lieu of any specific groups for preparation of religious services, José relies heavily upon a liturgical pamphlet, which in this case is Povo de Deus em São Paulo. Irmã Marta, the nun accompanying the CEB, also does provide assistance, but only as necessary.

To coordinate the group's various activities, the Comunidade Jaraguá maintains a conselho, but this is a rather loosely structured body. Its members are Irmã Marta, and some 5 to 8 volunteers lay participants. Normally, the conselho meets only as the need arises, to assess CEB activities, initiate revindicações, or to discuss maintenance of the group's community centre (which is, in actuality, a converted rural chapel). The conselho does not, interestingly enough, have any control over group finances, as do most other groups we have investigated. Contributions received during the celebrações and so forth are sent immediately to the parish church, and then returned by Pe. Miguel as funding for specific activities is required.

Institutional Relations: Despite such interference with group funding, Pe. Miguel is not directly involved with the CEB and rarely participates in its activities. Instead, he has assigned responsibility for the Comunidade Jaraguá to Irmã Marta, a 34 year-old nun who has been in the parish for some 2 years.

Irmã Marta is a stalwart supporter of the CEBs. Like Pe. Miguel, she maintains however somewhat mixed feelings about the present state of the phenomenon in São Paulo. When asked for example, if she approved of the political role which the groups appear to play in society, she offered this reply; "They have to be political, engaged in the

construction of a new social order," while adding that, "I still haven't seen a real CEB. They are still a very structured phenomenon," (Int. 3-6: 1, 3/27/84).

Marta has been working with the Comunidade Jaragua since its inception. According to one group leader, her presence is indispensable moreover, to the proper functioning of the CEB. Nothing, he claimed, is ever done without her knowledge and consent (Resp. 3-6: 2, 3/24/84).

Marta sees her principal role within the Comunidade Jaraguã as one of combating the religious traditionalism and apathy which she believes currently grips it. To this end, she usually attempts to conscientize group members by encouraging discussion during the weekly celebrações. It is not very often though that she meets with much success. At one celebração for example, after reading from the liturgical pamphlet, Marta asked those present to state the central message of the passage. This was followed by silence, and then she herself replied, "to evangelize." "What inhibits evangelization," she then went on. This question was met with minimal response, with only a few individuals suggesting things like greed, envy, hate, and so forth. After some moments of similarly stilted dialogue, Marta concluded by saying, "what then is the message for our fight this week," which was again followed by a long pause. Finally, in exasperation she exclaimed, "to go out and spread the Word!"

(Field notes, 3-6, 3/24/84).

Marta is quite well aware of the difficulties confronting her, and at one point openly expressed pessimism with regard to her chances for fully awakening her charges. In her view, even many of the successes she had scored were likely only illusory. "There are many," she explained,

who appear to be following the pastoral priorities of the Region, but I think that deep down, way down, even they don't accept them. They continue as they always were (Int. 3-6: 1, 3/27/84).

Certainly the members of the Comunidade Jaraguá appear to demonstrate little interest in strengthening the CEB's commitment to the 'new' Church through enhanced intra-institutional links. The CEB had never for example sent representatives to any CEB-related conferences beyond the sectoral level. In addition, contact with neighbouring groups has been negligible, with the possible exception of one CEB, the Comunidade Sumare. Even here however, cooperation has been restricted to joint preparation of parish festivals or celebrations of a traditional religious nature.

Comunidade - Unnamed

Background Characteristics: The second CEB to be examined (which as yet has no name) is approximately 3 years old, and is thus one of the more established comunidades in Verbo Divino parish. Presently, there are about 30 individuals participating in the CEB, only half of whom are under 30

years of age. About 80 percent moreover, are women, and an identical proportion are members of low-income families, earning 5 MS or less.

Goals and Activities: In terms of its background characteristics, this CEB is little different from the groups described thus far in this section. Yet, unlike these others, it does not engage in political activities. Nor for that matter are its religious functions that well developed. The central purpose of the CEB is, quite simply, biblical reflection, although charity work is reportedly undertaken from time to time.

Organizational Structure: The leadership and organizational structure of the CEB is extremely rudimentary. As regards its directorship first of all, the group has no conselho. Instead, two women have been appointed by the parish pastor Pe. Miguel as coordinators.

Group activities, what few exist, are undertaken or planned jointly by group members at weekly encounters held at the home of one of the coordinators. These meetings are not celebrações, but for the most part are simply prayer and study sessions. At such encounters, group members will sometimes improvise, selecting passages directly from the Bible to read aloud and discuss. Quite often though, meetings are centred around publications and study guides which frequently arrive from the Regional curia.

As a direct consequence of their explicitly political content however, the Regional discussion materials do not appear to be taken seriously by CEB members. At one meeting for instance, it was suggested in the booklet that some group participants form a study circle to discuss problems relating to discrimination against blacks in Brazil. Having read the section, many individuals remained uncertain about how, or even whether to act on this suggestion. Appearing to misinterpret the booklet's intent, one woman exclaimed half-jokingly:

But who is black and who is white anyway? I'm half and half [laughter]! There are so few whites anyway, if the Negroes form their own group, there won't be anybody left for ours! (Resp. 3-8: 2, 3/24/84).

Fortunately, a nun who was visiting the CEB at the time was able to clarify for them:

No, no, no! He [Regional bishop Dom Angélico] doesn't want separate groups, just that the Negroes coordinate or help arrange meetings to discuss their problems. These would be open to the whole group (Field notes, 3-8, 3/24/84).

Nevertheless, during the researcher's stay in the CEB, no such study circle was actually conceived, nor did any discussion ensue with regard to race relations.

Institutional Relations: As previously indicated, this group is exclusively lay run. CEB leaders, it should be emphasized once again however, were appointed by parish pastor Pe. Miguel, who himself remains the spiritual director of the

comunidade. As such, no decisions regarding meeting format, materials for discussion, or even meeting times are taken without his knowledge and consent. In this case therefore, it would seem that Pe. Miguel is committing the same sin of which he had so adamantly accused the central curia; i.e. that of controlling the CEBs to excess.

The comunidade's involvement with representatives of the Church other than Pe. Miguel, finally, is rather limited. So far, the group has attended only one CEB-related conference at the Archdiocesan level. It does of course participate to some extent with other CEBs within the parish. Such participation however, is restricted to functions of an exclusively festive or ceremonial nature.

Part III: Região SÉ

The third and last Episcopal Region we shall examine is Região SÉ, which lies at the heart of the Archdiocese and has a population of approximately 1.3 million. Most inhabitants of the Region are of middle to upper-class origin, and reside in exclusive suburbs of homogeneous ranks 1 and 2. The remaining 28 percent live in somewhat less opulent neighbourhoods of homogeneous ranks 3 and 4, located in and around São Paulo's central business district (Emplasa, 1982: 77; GESp, 1977: 5).

As compared to Santo Amaro and São Miguel, SÉ Region is the smallest in terms of size and population. Yet, it is divided into a similar number of sectors (6), and possesses a much larger number of parishes, at about 60. In charge of these parishes moreover, is a team of priests whose personal characteristics differ significantly from pastors in the two Regions previously discussed. First of all, some 64 percent of pastors in SÉ Region are native Brazilians, as compared with just 55 percent in the other Regions combined. Secondly, their mean age is 59, and thus they are on average at least 10 years older than corresponding personnel in both Santo Amaro and São Miguel. Finally, only 17 percent of parish priests in SÉ Region were ordained following the Second Vatican Council, contrasted with 50 and 65 percent for the other two Regions respectively (CERIS, 1977; Guia Geral, 1983).

Their advanced age and pre-Vatican II training in particular would suggest that on the whole, pastors within SÉ Region may be less in tune with the orientation of the 'new' Brazilian Church than their counterparts in São Miguel and Santo Amaro. The few studies which exist, such as Baraglia's (1983) survey of Archdiocesan pastors, do in fact point in this direction. Certainly there has been little apparent success with the CEBs in Região SÉ. Currently, there are just 12 groups listed in the Guia Geral (1983), far fewer than in any other Region (see Chapter III, Table 3.1).

Fully cognizant of the situation in Região SÉ, the Archdiocesan curia has taken steps to stimulate the implementation of the Church's 'preferential option for the poor' in the Region. Its most visible move, undertaken in 1979, was to appoint Dom Dêcio Pereira as Regional bishop. Dom Dêcio, at 43 is considerably younger than the majority of priests under his command and, unlike most, received his clerical ordination long after the close of the Second Vatican Council.

Admittedly, Dom Dêcio has worked most of his adult life in middle-class parishes in urban São Paulo, and consequently has little direct experience with the poor and with the CEBs in particular. Nevertheless, he does appear at least moderately progressive, and his views on the groups are generally in keeping with the official Archdiocesan position.

"A CEB", stated Dom Dêcio,

is a group within the Church which seeks to live the Gospel in all its profundity and dimensions (Int. SE-1, 2/8/84).

He greatly approves of the CEBs' political activation which, he adds, is a necessary and natural consequence of CEB members' adherence to the teachings of Christ. Overall, he believes, it is inevitable that the groups:

will bring a more just society, more Christian, as Christ taught. They will bring solidarity, fraternity, a change in social structure, and equality (Int. SE-1, 2/8/84).

Dom D ecio is careful however to stress the ecclesial component of the CEBs and insists that in effecting social change, the groups "must link themselves securely to the hierarchy," (Int. SE-1, 2/8/84).

As regards CEB promotion in the Region, the bishop claims to put forth a concerted effort. "I give all possible support," he said,

to promote community spirit. I make pastoral visits as well, in given sectors, to facilitate organization, the exchange of ideas, and so on (Int. SE-1, 2/8/84).

Supplementary materials for use in the Region's CEBs however, are few, although the curia did recently release a short document to commemorate the opening of the CNBB's 1984 Campanha da Fraternidade. This booklet outlines the various threats to life and health in S o Paulo, (eg. poverty, abandoned minors, unemployment, etc.) and discusses the formation and function of a number of currently active popular organizations.

So far, Dom D ecio's efforts at CEB promotion have largely been unsuccessful, as the CEB growth rate in S e Region has been virtually nil since 1980. Nevertheless, the bishop does not believe that actions above and beyond those already undertaken, such as those adopted in S o Miguel for instance, would likely result in any similar explosion of group formation. The lack of CEBs in the Region, he stated,

is attributable to structural causes, and these are not easily overcome.

In the first place, the bishop asserted, there are large numbers of middle-class individuals in the Region who, because of their monetary self-sufficiency and individualist attitude, are resistant to community formation. Secondly, in the core area especially, there exist scattered concentrations of urban slum-dwellers. These constitute a highly mobile group, stated Dom Décio, consequently making it difficult for religious personnel to achieve and maintain contact with them (Int. SE-1, 2/8/84).

As opposed to middle-class individuals, one would think that this latter group of slum-dwellers, or cortiços as they are called, would be ideally suited for CEB formation, if only because of the desperate nature of their situation. Most cortiços are peasants who have recently migrated to São Paulo in search of work. They originate either from the interior of São Paulo or neighbouring Minas Gerais states, or from the rural areas of the Brazilian northeast. Typically, these migrants arrive in the city with little money and few contacts, and consequently are forced to find lodging in large family dwellings or even shops which have been illegally converted to one room flats. In SÉ Region alone, there are estimated to be nearly 1200 such houses or pensões, with anywhere from 50 to 200 people living in each (FABES, 1983: 263-4). A recent article in O São Paulo described life

in the pensões as worse than in the favelas in the outlying areas of São Paulo:

An average house with no more than an 8 metre frontage and a large yard can hold 40, 50 or even 60 families, who live in cubicles, paying high rents and with minimal conditions of comfort and hygiene...Depending upon the occupant, the rent for a small room 2.5 by 2.5 metres can cost Cr\$ 15,000 to 30,000 [15 to 30 U.S. dollars approximately] including water and light ('Cortigo realidade', 1984).

But although the individuals who live in such abodes may be ideal candidates for CEB membership, certain factors prevent the cortigos from becoming involved with the groups. As a priest working in SÊ Region related, there are first of all, paid spies who live rent-free in the pensões and regularly inform landlords about suspicious actions or troublemakers. Thus, involvement in even the most basic CEB activities, such as consciousness-raising or reflection, could easily result in eviction. Secondly, any natural sense of community within the pensões is limited because the lack of space, and hence of privacy in the buildings gives rise to a good deal of tension among the residents. Thirdly, most cortigos are extremely mobile, and change locations often. Even those who are relatively stationary, it was pointed out by the priest, are driven by a belief that they will soon move on as their standard of living improves. Consequently, they are largely uninterested in becoming involved in long term improvement projects, such as the revindicações (Int.

SE-7, 1/27/84). Finally, a layman working with cortiços also suggested that work patterns frequently do not allow for fixed meeting times, as the CEBs require. Those who are employed, it seems, are forced to take menial jobs as domestics or security guards, and must work long and irregular hours (Int. SE-3, 2/1/84).

Within the pensões, some CEBs do exist however, and these are the only type of lower-class groups extant in the Region. In the following section, we shall examine two such CEBs in detail. These are found in neighbouring parishes located in a rather run-down sector on the north side of São Paulo's centre core area.

Paróquia Espírito Santo

The first CEB to be investigated is situated in the parish of Espírito Santo. This parish is located in a somewhat shabby neighbourhood in which there are large concentrations of stores and various types of small businesses. Of the 35,000 individuals resident in Espírito Santo, some 15,000 are cortiços. No area inhabitants earn over 12 MS, and about two-thirds of all families fall within the 5 MS and under wage category.

The local pastor is Frei Karl, a 43 year-old German friar of the Franciscan order. He has been in the parish for approximately one year, but has some 18 years experience working in lower-class areas on the outskirts of Rio de

Janeiro. Frei Karl has consequently, first hand knowledge of the CEBs, and is a firm believer in their potential for effecting social change. "The CEBs", he stated, bring forth:

personal conversion and the conversion of the environment. [They] enhance consciousness of reality, give value to the people, and change old style politics, [that is] paternalism (Int. SE-5, 3/1/84).

Frei Karl attempts to promote CEB formation in Espírito Santo in the following way. "How do I sell fish?" he asked,

We visit families, offer social assistance, as well as inform people. We also stimulate reflective groups (Int. SE-5, 3/1/84).

Such tactics however, Frei Karl admits, have to date been futile. This state of affairs, he largely blames on the great movement of poor in the parish, the de-personalized atmosphere of the inner city, and on the religious traditionalism of the cortiços, most of whom, he stated, come from rural areas (Int. SE-5, 3/1/84).

Comunidade-Unnamed

Background Characteristics: The one existing group in Espírito Santo is approximately 6 months old, and is located in a small pensão nearby the parish church. Although there some 8 families in the building, the CEB currently has only 4 or 5 regular participants, nearly all of whom are women in the 30 to 49 age range. All of these moreover, are migrants

(from northeastern states), and all are members of families earning well under 5 MS.

Goals and Activities: To date, prayer and reflection are the only activities in which the group regularly engages. Political consciousness-raising is sometimes attempted, but no revindicações have ever been planned or executed.

Organizational Structure: The leadership structure of the group first of all, is extremely basic, and there is no conselho. The comunidade is directed by a single lay volunteer from the parish named Emílio.

Due to the small size of the CEB, there are moreover no sub-groups or teams as might be found in larger groups. All group activities are carried out jointly by CEB participants at weekly meetings. In actuality, these encounters tend to be little more than Bible reading and study sessions, and are usually held in the room of one or another of the members.

During the researcher's stay in the group, the CEB was attempting to work its way through a pamphlet produced by the Regional curia in commemoration of the CNBB's 1984 Campanha da Fraternidade. As in other groups previously discussed, participants appeared to be having some difficulty in grasping the political significance of the material. Having jointly read through a section on the problems faced by the poor in São Paulo for example, many were unable to

identify with the passage. Specifically, when asked what was the greatest problem facing them, they were somewhat lost for words. One woman mentioned the stoplight at the corner of the street which was not functioning. Another complained that "the door in this place, it won't shut properly, letting anybody in," and that "the shower as well is not working." This last comment was followed by a heated discussion about whether or not the door and shower should be repaired or replaced and by whom. The group leader's frequent attempts moreover, to re-orient the discussion along more productive lines were virtually ignored in the fracas (Field notes, 2-6, 5/23/84).

Institutional Relations: The parish pastor, Frei Karl, has no direct ties to the CEB. Rather, the group is guided by Emílio, a lay activist appointed by Frei Karl to promote CEB formation among the local cortiços. Emílio is a 24 year-old, university-educated sales supervisor, and has been working in Espírito Santo for approximately 3 years.

Like Frei Karl, Emílio believes strongly in the necessity of Church initiative to stimulate CEB activation among urban slum-dwellers. In his view, lay or religious leaders are required because the people are afraid, and are thus reluctant to take any action which might conceivably result in eviction from their homes. In addition, Emílio claimed that the people must be made to think in terms of

self-initiative and mutual cooperation, and to reject their traditional over-reliance upon authority figures. The cortico's 'patron-client' mentality, he stated, is an extremely serious hindrance to community formation. By way of example, Emílio related that a woman had once complained to him that working mothers in her pensão had been unable to place their children in the parish-run daycare centre. Consequently, she asked Emílio to speak to Frei Karl on their behalf. In reply Emílio suggested that instead of appealing to the parish priest, the women should get together and form their own mini-nursery, to be run by one of the mothers who was not currently employed. This attempt to spur interest in a self-help community project, was reportedly met however with little enthusiasm, and according to Emílio, the women continued to plead for outside help (Int. 2-6: 2, 2/25/84).

In accordance with his view of the lay activist's role in CEB development, Emílio attempts to foster a sense of pride and self-worth among the members of his own CEB. During one group discussion for example, he tried to point out that group participants share much in common with the poor and oppressed in general, that they are not to blame for their situation, and that social change is possible through joint effort (Field notes, 2-6, 5/23/84). At the same time though, Emílio appears to have adopted an extremely paternalistic stance with respect to the group, and is

unusually protective of its participants. Upon first entering the group, the researcher was in fact prohibited from revealing his true identity, and was introduced only as a friend. Even after his name and real intent were disclosed, both Emílio and his mother Antonia (who occasionally also works with the CEB), were reluctant to allow the researcher to ask questions directly of the members. When this in time was finally conceded, Antonia was visibly annoyed with the type of questions which were asked, claiming they were of an overly personal nature. Referring to the researcher's questions about group members' marital status, she admonished:

We never discuss these things in the group. Teresa for example was forced to reply that she isn't married, and there in the room are her three small children, asleep. As far as we are concerned, this really doesn't matter.

Antonia also chastized the researcher for taking too long in posing his questions. "I'm concerned as well," she stated, because the meeting went later than usual and these people have to get up very early and go to work," (Int. 2-6: 1, 5/23/84).

CEB members' contacts with institutional representatives other than Emílio and his mother, it should be added, are all but non-existent. The group has established no links whatsoever with other lay groups in the local area, nor has it ever sent delegates to CEB-related encounters organized by the hierarchy.

Paróquia Nossa Senhora de Lourdes

The final CEB to be investigated is located in the parish of Nossa Senhora de Lourdes. This is an extremely small parish situated in a primarily commercial and industrial zone to the east of Espírito Santo parish just described. Only about 4,000 people actually live here, approximately one-half of whom are cortiços. Not surprisingly moreover, an almost identical proportion of area residents are members of families earning 5 MS or less.

Presiding over this domain is Pe. Arturo, a 61 year-old diocesan priest. Pe. Arturo was born in Italy, but has lived nearly all of his life in Brazil. Since his clerical ordination in 1954, he has worked as a teacher and administrator in Catholic schools, and received his present posting only 4 years ago.

Since his arrival, Pe. Arturo has not involved himself to any extent in CEB promotion. When asked his thoughts regarding the phenomenon in general, he simply replied, "I don't work with them, I never have. I just don't know," (Int. SE-6, 3/20/84). CEB-related matters in the parish, he stated, are cared for exclusively by Irmã Maria, a teacher at one of the Catholic colégios in the area.

Comunidade-Unnamed

Background Characteristics: There is currently only one CEB in the parish, which is approximately 2 years old. It is found in a medium sized pensão, in which some 75 to 100 individuals are living. Of these, only 3 or 4 actually participate in the CEB, all of whom are women between the ages of 30 and 49, and all of whose families take home well under 5 MS.

Goals and Activities: Although other CEBs of comparable age have long histories of involvement with the revindicações and other political activities, this group is involved strictly in religious undertakings. Prayer is a major activity, as is reflection, although this latter function is carried out in a rather limited fashion. From time to time, charity work is also undertaken by the CEB, usually in aid of pensão-dwellers who are sick or in need of companionship.

Organizational Structure: The CEB has no formal leadership structure such as a conselho. All decisions regarding group activities are taken by Irmã Maria, who has accompanied the CEB since its inception.

CEB activities are carried out by members at twice-weekly encounters, held at the pensão in one of the participants' rooms. Meetings usually open with a prayer, followed by an informal discussion on some specific topic as

chosen by Irmã Maria. At the close of group encounters, Maria instructs CEB participants on the fine points of knitting and crochet (the only remotely political activity undertaken by the group).

Group discussions, as in a number of other groups previously described, are normally somewhat laboured, with Maria doing most of the talking. The liveliest discussion observed by the researcher had little to do with religion or politics, and occurred after Maria inadvertently struck a sour note with one of the participants. At the time, she was asking each member present if they loved their fellow human beings. "Do you love?" Maria asked one young girl who had been in attendance that day. "No," came the reply, "I hate." "Whom do you hate?" the nun responded. Releasing a torrent of tears, the young woman pointed in the direction of the zeladora (building superintendent) and stated, "her!" She then went on to explain that the zeladora had been threatening her mother with eviction because of her loud music and proclivity for bringing home male companions late at night. Following this accusation, a bout of name calling ensued, and the zeladora got up and left, vowing never to return to the group. Having been unable to re-direct the discussion, Irmã Maria abruptly ended the encounter, while stating that she would return in a few days "when heads had cooled," (Field notes, 2-5, 3/20/84).

Institutional Relations: The group was founded, and is presently sustained through the efforts of Irmã Maria alone. The nun is some 60 years old, and has worked as a teacher for approximately 37 years. She has been in Nossa Senhora de Lourdes parish for about 3 years, during which time she has worked closely with cortiços, having personally visited over half of the 80 pensões in the area.

As a prominent member of the CEB Pastoral of Região Se, Maria is a strong supporter of the CEBs. She is however, somewhat ambivalent about the necessity of their involvement in purely political matters. "The CEB," she explained,

is the expression of this new conception [i.e. of Vatican II] and is an attempt by the Church to create a community of people in the religious sense.

Thus, "an essentially religious CEB," she went on, "can be a real comunidade, although they may and sometimes must be involved in politics," (Int. 2-5: 1, 3/20/84).

With respect to her own CEB, the approach which Irmã Maria has adopted is clearly apolitical. She spends a considerable amount of time for example, attempting to resolve members' personal problems (eg. marital breakdown, alcoholism, etc.), and is deeply concerned about their lack of religious training. In dealing with this latter concern, she constantly encourages parents to send their children to the local colégio, where she claims, they will learn about God. Even when offering vocational guidance to adults, Maria is careful to emphasize the religious element. As she told

one man, "your wife should go to the parish school and learn how to sew, and there she'll also learn about our religion," (Field notes, 2-5, 3/20/84).

Little attempt is ever made by the nun to interest group participants in the revindicações, or even consciousness-raising. In fact, quite the opposite would appear to be true. She refers for instance, to the pensão as her quintalzinho (little garden), and in spite of the deplorable conditions found therein, is reluctant to criticize the landlord, saying she understands him to be "kind and just." To improve the quality of life in the pensão, residents, she asserted, should do their best to keep their area clean, and to help other older occupants to do the same. Ideally, Irmã Maria suggested, all tenants should act as if part of one big family (Field notes, 2-5, 3/20/84).

Irmã Maria, finally, is the only point of contact between the CEB and the institutional Church. The CEB has never sent its members to CEB-related conferences at any level, nor does it maintain contact with any other lay groups in the surrounding area.

Summary and Conclusion

In this Chapter, we have described in detail the inner workings of the 11 lower-class CEBs in our sample. In the next Chapter, we shall undertake a similar analysis of

the remaining 11 groups, all of which are located in middle-class areas of São Paulo. The fundamental characteristics, goals and institutional linkages of the two group-types will be compared in Chapter VI. Before proceeding to Chapter V, we should like however, to recap our qualitative findings with respect to the lower-class CEBs, and to briefly assess the impact of the data on our three research hypotheses.

Generally speaking, the data on the poor CEBs provide us with little cause for accepting any of the hypotheses, and largely confirm the assertions made at the close of the previous Chapter, which were based on purely quantitative findings. With regard to hypothesis one, first of all, our characterization of the lower-class CEBs as a heterogeneous collectivity was not only upheld but actually enhanced. Irrespective of the age or organizational maturity of the group for example, the emphasis placed on religious and political activities varied widely from CEB to CEB. More importantly perhaps, some groups in fact maintained no functions of a political, or even religiously innovative nature whatsoever.

Even among those CEBs which were reportedly involved in secular activities, broad differences existed in the quality of the functions undertaken. Only a few of the lower-class CEBs for instance, most of them in São Miguel Region, had actually formed special groups, or regularly arranged meetings for consciousness-raising. In addition, of

those groups engaged in the revindicações, just over half had actually initiated and undertaken these on their own. A similarly limited proportion moreover, had engaged in community action (whether alone or in conjunction with other CEBs), with any real degree of success.

Intra-CEB differences in ideological orientation, it should also be emphasized, were at least as pronounced as those existing between groups. Many of the poor CEBs in fact, were clearly divided into readily identifiable opposing factions. On the one hand were those supporting the enhanced political involvement of the CEB while, on the other, existed a substantial element wishing to strengthen the CEBs' religious activities.

Qualitative data on the leadership structure of the lower-class CEBs does similar damage to hypothesis two, which states that such groups are inherently democratic. To a limited extent, the hypothesis would seem to be true, as many of the CEBs did indeed possess a functioning directorate or conselho which was responsible for coordinating group activities. Nevertheless, more than a few did not, and were controlled directly by Church agents or clerically appointed laypersons. Moreover, where conselhos did exist, all save one were not directly elected by the general membership. Neither were they necessarily accountable to ordinary CEB participants, as few conselhos had established regular means

for consulting openly, or ratifying decisions with group members.

Of all the hypotheses, it is undoubtedly the third which suffers the most as a result of our qualitative findings. The third hypothesis, it will be recalled, states that the CEBs rely little upon the institutional support of the Church. Nothing however, could be further from the truth. Quite clearly, all the lower-class CEBs were situated securely within existing Church structure, and operated under the close scrutiny of Regional authorities. In São Miguel especially, the Regional curia was involved in the day to day operations of the CEBs, mandating for example, the activation of grupos de rua, and inundating the groups with discussion materials of a highly political nature. Moreover, nearly all of the poor CEBs in every Region employed Church-published liturgical pamphlets, instruction booklets and other aids during their meetings; many were regularly represented at CEB-related conferences sponsored by the hierarchy, and most cooperated with CEBs and other lay groups in undertaking parish level activities.

Religious personnel, finally, were shown to play a crucial role in orienting the CEBs in a good number of cases, and did not appear to be simply guiding a natural, evolutionary process. For example, in CEBs where such personnel were present, they were normally accorded a special status within both the group generally, and the ruling

conselho. Even in CEBs where Church agents were less directly involved, only rarely did the membership proceed without first consulting local representatives of the hierarchy.

It was apparent moreover, that the particular orientation of the priests or nuns involved, and their relationship to the groups under their supervision, was in some way related to the level of political involvement attained by the CEBs. In those groups where religious personnel were both constantly present, and politically progressive, the CEB had usually become involved in such things as consciousness-raising and the revindicações. Where they were absent, or only rarely present, the political involvement of the CEB was either weak, or simply non-existent; and finally, where religious personnel were present, but apolitical, the politicization of group members was actually prevented.

In offering a further challenge to our three research hypotheses, the qualitative data presented in this Chapter suggest once again the superiority of the institutional over the grassroots approach to the CEB phenomenon. Quite clearly, it seems unlikely that any phenomenon which is purportedly class-based and oriented should exhibit such diverse and inconsistent tendencies in so many respects, and depend to such a large extent on institutional initiative for its development (if not survival).

One must still ask however, if there is not at least some justification for the grassroots assertion that the social location of the groups contributes to their essential nature and thrust. The quantitative data presented in Chapter III, which pointed to the fact that the sample lower-class CEBs were but little different from their middle-class counterparts, strongly suggested that no such justification exists. We shall only however, be able to definitively answer the question we have posed, through a more intense examination of the 11 middle-class CEBs, which shall be presented forthwith.

NOTES

¹Throughout the Archdiocese, priests, nuns, and laypersons referred to Santo Amaro as possessing the most politically active and mature CEBs in São Paulo.

²In this respect, Dom Antonio may however, merely be falling into step with the central curia which would like to see the pamphlet in question adopted for use throughout the Archdiocese.

³In order to disguise the identity of priests, nuns, and laypersons interviewed during the course of the research, the names of all parishes, CEBs, and individuals referred to in this and the following Chapter have been altered.

⁴As there are no precise numbers available from official Church sources, parish population figures used in this Chapter represent pastors' estimates only.

⁵These statistics are for micro-areas of the Municipality of São Paulo which were selected to correspond roughly with parish or CEB neighbourhood boundaries. All other data presented in this Chapter moreover, referring to family incomes within specific geographical areas were derived from the source cited in the text.

⁶The number of CEBs reported for specific parishes throughout this Chapter represent pastors' estimates and may or may not correspond with official figures as published in the 1983 Archdiocesan Guia Geral.

⁷Data on CEB members' sex, age, and family income presented in this Chapter were gathered by means of questionnaire.

⁸In this group and others to be examined in the Chapter, bazaars, raffles, and bingos are often held to raise money for CEB activities. Such funding is in addition to monies collected at weekly religious services.

⁹As in most other CEBs to be discussed, group funds are also used for administrative purposes (writing materials, bulletins, etc.), travel expenses for conselho members on CEB business, and liturgical and discussion aids purchased through the Regional curia.

¹⁰These encounters or reuniões occur fairly frequently, but according to no set schedule, and unfortunately the Church keeps no precise records of how many are held at any given level during the year. Within the Archdiocese as a whole, the most common type of meeting occurs at the sectoral level, with fewer encounters at higher levels of Church government. At the national level for example, there have been just 5 CEB conferences since the first was held in Vitória (Espírito Santo state) in 1976).

¹¹This is actually a translation of a booklet first published in Colombia, and later adapted for use in Brazil.

¹²To a certain extent, this was indeed true, although the situation was by no means unique to the Comunidade São Rafael. As a matter of courtesy, it was expected that the researcher first contact the local pastor or appropriate representative of the hierarchy before gathering data in area under their jurisdiction. It was also methodologically prudent to do so. Bypassing this informality, the researcher found from experience, could have had a serious impact on the quality of the data obtained. On the one hand, the Church agent involved could easily have refused to grant an interview, and or provide access to the CEBs in his or her area. On the other hand, many CEB members themselves may not have cooperated fully with the researcher until satisfied that the local pastor was aware of his presence and intent.

¹³This was probably true, to the extent at least that Pe. Franco shared his bishop's strident nationalism and anti-imperialist attitude.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE NATURE AND THRUST OF MIDDLE-CLASS CEBs

Introduction

In this Chapter, we shall describe in detail the background characteristics, goals and activities, organizational structure and institutional linkages of the 11 middle-class CEBs in our sample. As we shall see, the middle-class groups, like their lowest-class counter parts, are a fairly heterogeneous lot, in each of these fundamental respects. Once again moreover, it will be shown how the essential nature and thrust of each CEB is subtly shaped by the quality of the group's ecclesial ties.

The middle-class CEBs to be examined are located in the more affluent sectors of the same Santo Amaro, Sē, and São Miguel Episcopal Regions described in Chapter IV. Consequently, we shall here again divide the Chapter into three sections, dealing in turn with the parishes and affiliated CEBs within each of the three Regions in question. Before proceeding with such an examination however, let us first briefly review the 'official' position with respect to middle-class CEBs, as expressed by Cardinal Arns, leading theologian Frei Betto, and the bishops of our three sample Regions.

The Hierarchy's View of Middle-Class CEBs

As we saw in Chapter II, the Church in São Paulo has in recent years placed a good deal of emphasis on CEB formation among the lower-classes, as perhaps the most salient expression of its 'preferential option for the poor'. Lay group promotion among the middle and upper classes along similar lines has however, received much less attention, since their economic well-being and elevated social status obviously excludes them from the ranks of the oppressed.

Officially, the Church in São Paulo has no difficulty in justifying a plan for lay activation which seems to favour one social class over another. Frei Betto for example, states that "in the past it was an error for the Church to promote harmony between classes," adding that in supporting the poor, the Church "has adopted a strategy in line with its roots," (Int. AR-2, 4/4/84). Cardinal Arns as well makes no apologies for the stance adopted by the Archdiocese, arguing that reality has called for drastic action in defence of the poor as a dominated and exploited class. "We depart from the incontestable principle," he explains,

...that society is divided into classes whose interests are frankly antagonistic, and within this setting, we have made a clear preferential option for the oppressed class (Arns, 1984).

Dom Paulo is careful to emphasize though, that the Church has no interest in exacerbating class conflict through its active support of the CEBs among the poor only. "We have no

intention," the Cardinal insists, "of fomenting hatred between social classes," (Arns, 1984).

Central to Dom Paulo's wish that such animosity be avoided however, is the firm belief that more affluent Brazilians can and will in time be thoroughly converted to the cause of the lower-class CEBs, and hence that of the disadvantaged classes in general; in other words, that the middle and upper classes will come to embrace the Church's 'preferential option for the poor'. Such a belief is also held by Frei Betto, who states similarly that "the rich must come to the poor," if the Kingdom of Heaven is to be realized (Int. AR-2, 4/4/84).

To the extent then, that the plight of the poor is focused upon, lay activation among the middle-classes through their own comunidades would, in theory at least, be welcomed by the hierarchy. The truth is however, that most middle-class groups are seen as primarily spiritual, and as lacking a worldly commitment to equality and social justice which might predispose them to a symbolic alliance with the lower-classes. Consequently, they are viewed somewhat unfavourably by the hierarchy. In their pursuit of a more traditional religiosity, claims Cardinal Arns for example, the middle-class CEBs are in fact misguided. They have in effect, misinterpreted the true meaning of the term 'religious'. "To say that a CEB is religious," Dom Paulo explains,

and to lay aside its political dimensions, reducing them to mere practices of prayer, reflection, and worship, without a consequent organized action in favour of life, is to distort what the Sacred Scriptures mean, on the whole, by religious (Arns, 1984).

For reasons similar to those expressed by Cardinal Arns, the bishops who administer the three Episcopal Regions from which our sample groups are chosen, tend also to see most middle-class CEBs as somewhat misdirected. Among the three however, there is some disagreement as to whether all such CEBs are necessarily oriented towards apolitical concerns. Two of the bishops, Dom Antonio Gaspar of Santo Amaro, and Dom Décio Pereira of SÉ Region, deny this is in fact so, and openly stated a desire to see more middle-class groups emerge which are ideologically committed to the cause of the poor. The task of CEB formation among the more affluent, they admitted, is difficult, due to the self-sufficiency of the middle-classes, but is not impossible. In contrast to such optimism, Dom Angélico Bernardino of São Miguel refuses even to discuss the possibility of middle-class CEBs which are in tune with the Church's political aims. When asked for instance, if groups among the more affluent in his Region could be considered authentic (i.e. oriented towards social change), he angrily retorted:

I am not worried about whether or not they are real. I am only worried about our CEBs [of the poor who are] exploited by the politicians and the multi-nationals (Int. SM-1, 3/2/84).

The views of the hierarchy notwithstanding, the fact is that there already do exist a number of CEBs among the middle-classes which share a surprising amount in common with their ostensibly more worldly lower-class counterparts. This will become clear as we investigate each of our sample middle-class groups in the sections which follow. We shall begin our examinations with three groups which are located in Santo Amaro Region.

Part I: Região Santo Amaro

Paróquia João Batista

Our first two middle-class CEBs are found in the parish of João Batista, situated in the extreme north of Santo Amaro Region. This is a relatively large parish, given its urban location, and has about 160,000 inhabitants.¹ There are a few favelas within its borders, but for the most part, parishoners are of middle-class origin, with some 72 percent of families resident in the general area earning above the 12 MS mark (PMSP, 1980).²

For the past two years, the parish has been administered by a 52 year-old Italian-born secular priest named Pe. Giorgio. Prior to his present posting, Pe. Giorgio spent many years working in rural areas in the Brazilian interior. Here he became quite familiar with base communities, and eventually developed a certain enthusiasm

for their societally transforming potential.

In his current setting, the priest has retained a keen interest in the CEBs, but has found group formation to be a most difficult task. "The middle-classes," he stated, "will not accept co-participation with the people, to help them resolve their own problems." Nevertheless, Pe. Giorgio claims to have not given up, and actively tries to interest his parishoners in developing real base communities which are not simply oriented towards prayer and charity work. "I am trying," he said, "to form a [new] mentality in the parish, using the mass, and [parish] publications," (Int. SA-4, 3/8/84).

To date, Pe. Giorgio has had at least some success in stimulating CEB activation. Since his arrival in the parish, he has been able to form 2 new CEBs, bringing the total number of groups in João Batista to 6.

Comunidade-Unnamed (1)

Background Characteristics: One of the older CEBs in the parish is an unnamed group which has been in operation for approximately 9 years, and consists of some 9 married couples. All group members are over 40 years of age, and all earn in excess of 15 MS.³

Goals and Activities: The comunidade pursues only a few basic religious ends. Reflection and prayer are the major

activities of the group, although members also occasionally engage in Bible study and charity work. In addition, once every three months, the CEB helps to prepare mass which is said by Pe. Giorgio at the parish church.

It might be added that certain political activities, such as consciousness-raising, are not entirely avoided by the group despite its primarily religious orientation. This particular function is undertaken, informally at least, on a relatively frequent basis, as political themes are suggested during periods of reflection and discussion.

Organizational Structure: As do a number of lower-class groups the CEB maintains extremely basic leadership and organizational structures. It has for example, no conselho, but is led by a clerically-appointed lay coordinator named João. Basically, João is in charge of chairing group meetings, and collecting and dispensing members' charitable donations as necessary. In addition, he acts as liaison between the CEB and the parish.

Activities within the CEB are undertaken and planned jointly by the membership at weekly encounters held at one of the participants' homes. Normally, meetings open with a prayer, which is followed by a hymn or two, and then an informal discussion of some prepared text which the members themselves have chosen. During the researcher's stay in the group, participants were working their way through a booklet

of readings prepared by the CNBB in commemoration of the opening of its 1984 Campanha da Fraternidade. The debate stimulated by the material, it might be noted, was generally much livelier than that engendered by similar discussion aids in most lower-class CEBs. All group members in fact, participated freely and often. Moreover, participants exhibited no apparent fear of dealing with explicitly political issues, such as unemployment or social injustice. One week for example, those present heatedly discussed the merits of direct elections for the Brazilian Presidency, and the role of the Church in bringing about change in the structure of Brazilian society (Field notes, 1-2, 3/14/84).

The CEB's weekly encounters invariably close with a period of socializing unheard of in comunidades of the poor. Typically, refreshments are served by the host (in whose home the meeting takes place), and members remain seated for up to an hour chatting amiably about family, personal, or business matters.

Institutional Relations: The comunidade is not directly under the supervision of any Church agent. While Pe. Giorgio is officially the group's spiritual director, he rarely attends the CEB's meetings, nor does he participate in its activities. For the most part, it is merely incumbent upon João to inform the priest of the group's progress, and of any difficulties it may be having (Resp. 1-2: 1, 3/14/84).

Links with Church groups or agents other than Pe. Giorgio are similarly tenuous. For example, the group has never attended Regional or even sectoral level CEB conferences sponsored by the hierarchy. Occasionally however, it does participate with other parish lay groups in planning local religious activities.

Comunidade-Unnamed (2)

Background Characteristics: The next group to be investigated is some 2 years old, and consequently is one of the newer CEBs in the João Batista parish. It presently has about 35 members, nearly all of whom are former students of a Catholic boys' school located within parish boundaries. CEB participants thus tend to be rather young, and most are male. Virtually all moreover, come from middle-class families with incomes in excess of 10 MS.

Goals and Activities: This particular comunidade is one of the most political of its kind in our sample. Its sole aim, stated a group leader, is to "follow the option for the poor, the option of the Church," (Resp. 1-3: 2, 4/8/84).

In pursuing this goal, the CEB engages heavily in political action on two fronts. First of all, it is involved in literacy training among the poor in several parishes on the periphery of São Paulo. Individuals are taught to read and write using the famous Paulo Freire method, which

combines literacy training with conscientization.⁴ Secondly, in a more direct manner, CEB members are engaged in an effort to politically activate the inhabitants of a large favela on the eastern flank of the Archdiocese. Their activities in this favela, known as Buraco Quente (Hot Hollow), grew out of initial attempts at literacy training among the favelados. When only a few of the local residents demonstrated any real interest in learning how to read and write, CEB members resolved to try and involve the slum-dwellers in more concrete political undertakings such as the revindicações, (So far however, none have successfully been instigated).

Despite its strong political involvement, the CEB does offer a limited number of religious activities to some of its members. Reflection and discussion for example, are frequently undertaken at conselho meetings. Recently moreover, one of the priests accompanying the CEB began offering monthly celebrações to group directors.

Organizational Structure: The group has a well-defined organizational structure similar to that of some lower-class CEBs examined in the previous Chapter. To begin with, the work of the CEB is carried out by some 8 teams or sub-groups, each of which specializes in either literacy training or direct political conscientization. In terms of their operational method, the two sub-group types are rather distinct. While the work of the literacy teams is

straightforward, (as it is based upon a set method), that of the conscientizing teams in the Buraco Quente is slightly more involved. Their overall objective in the favela, one group leader explained, "is to stimulate CEB formation, youth groups, and other popular organizations," (Resp. 1-3: 2, 4/8/84). This is rather painstaking work, and unlike literacy training, tangible results are not always forthcoming. At times moreover, stated a team leader, members become frustrated with their task, and try to push too hard to achieve certain goals. Such action, he suggested, only leads to still greater frustration on the part of the team member, and is in any case ill-conducive to successful conscientization. "We cannot force anything," the sub-group director stressed;

Perhaps a group [within the favela] could be well under way and then 3 weeks later, everything collapses. If it does, then it does, that is just the way it is (Resp. 1-3: 4, 4/8/84).

To coordinate the work of the CEB, the group possesses a conselho consisting of 3 priests who accompany the comunidade, and the leaders of the 8 sub-groups. This steering body meets once a month at the home of one of the conselho members. Conselho meetings normally open with a celebração as said by Pe. Rodrigo, one of the CEB's resident priests. Team leaders then report in turn on progress made within their particular spheres of action since the last encounter. Depending upon how long this takes, one of the

priests present may initiate a discussion on some aspect of Biblical teaching, or some topic of Church-related interest. During one meeting for example, a priest asked those present to comment on recent pronouncements from Rome with regard to the validity of Liberation Theology, and the implications of these statements for the CEB's work among the poor (Field notes, 1-3, 4/8/84). Finally, after all group business has been dealt with, group members settle down to a period of socializing, conversing among themselves over coffee and biscuits.

As in many of the lower-class CEBs, all decisions taken during these monthly conselho encounters are final. There are no ratification meetings ever held with the general membership of the entire group. Information is simply passed along to ordinary participants informally at the team level.

Institutional Relations: Though technically a part of the João Batista parish, local pastor Pe. Giorgio has had very little to do with the group since its inception some 2 years ago. The CEB is however, far from autonomous, and is accompanied by no less than 3 priests, each of whom teaches at the parish colégio from which most group participants have graduated.

These priests, like their counterparts in many less affluent groups, are active members of their CEB's conselho; and though they claim no special status therein, it is

abundantly clear that they are in full command of the group. They alone for example, offer the celebrações, and all CEB meetings are jointly chaired by them. One or the other moreover, is invariably the first and last to speak on any given occasion.

Despite such apparent cooperation between the three in administering the group, there is, it might be added, some disagreement among the priests with respect to the ideological direction which the CEB should take. Pe. Afonso for example, the 34 year-old Italian-born diocesan priest who initiated the group, would like to see the comunidade remain a fundamentally Christian vehicle through which young people may tackle real social problems. He has come under attack however from his colleagues for being too religiously conservative. The other priests (both of whom are Brazilian-born and slightly younger than Pe. Afonso) commented for instance, that the cleric is pushing "the religious angle" too hard. As a result, they stated, the political dynamism of the CEB is beginning to suffer (Resps. 1-3: 3; 1-3: 4, 4/8/84).

Pe. Afonso countered his claim by stating that certain 'unnamed' group leaders were simply over-connected to the Theology of Liberation, with its strong emphasis on political action. While admitting that the "politicization of the group is important," he cautioned that it must be carefully undertaken, since it tends to "jeopardize their

[group members'] religion," or in other words, their adherence to more traditional Catholic beliefs and practices (Int. 1-3: 1, 4/23/84).

Group participants, for their part, appear at least to have lined up behind Pe. Afonso, and have worked to boost the CEB's religious content. For example, in spite of protests voiced by the two other priests in the group, it was the membership which insisted upon the inclusion of worship services (celebrações) at monthly conselho meetings (as per Resp. 1-3: 3, 4/8/84).

Finally, in addition to the strong clerical presence in the group, the CEB maintains fairly extensive contact with a number of Church circles and pastoral agents. Although for example, it rarely participates with neighbouring lay groups in planning local activities, the CEB is heavily involved with other comunidades and parish organs through which it works in undertaking literacy training and conscientization on the periphery. Moreover, the group regularly sends delegates to CEB-related meetings, so far up to and including the Regional level.

Paróquia Santa Tereza

The third and last CEB to be examined in Santo Amaro Region is found in the parish of Santa Tereza. Santa Tereza, which has a population of 25 to 30,000, is located in an

extremely affluent area of the Region, in which nearly 80 percent of resident families earn in excess of 12 MS.

Administering the parish is Pe. Luiz, a 38 year-old Brazilian-born diocesan priest who, prior to entering the seminary, had obtained university degrees in philosophy and sociology. Since his ordination in 1970, Pe. Luiz has worked only briefly among the poor, and has spent most of his clerical career in middle-class parishes. He has been in his present posting for about 4 years.

Perhaps because of his secular educational training, Pe. Luiz maintains some rather unorthodox views with regard to the CEBs and CEB formation among the lower-classes. He believes that the groups have been subject to over-manipulation by the central curia, which has sought to promote the revindicações at all costs. As a result, they have become little more than complaint groups, devoid of true political character. The CEBs should however, he stated, be communities in the real sense, in which true fraternity prevails, and action is consciously and freely taken for the common good (Int. SA-3, 3/13/84).

Stimulating a sense of community among the poor, Pe. Luiz admitted, is rather difficult. Among the middle-classes though, he explained, it is almost impossible. "It is difficult," he explained,

to break the self-sufficiency of middle-class individuals, to motivate them towards others, towards real necessities (Int. SA-3, 3/13/84).

Nevertheless, in his own parish, the priest has made a sincere effort to develop a sense of community spirit utilizing a rather unique method. His first act, upon arriving in Santa Tereza, was to eliminate virtually all conventional lay groups, such as the married couple encounters, Bible study circles, charity groups and so forth. He then attempted to form a nucleus of concerned individuals primarily by drawing parishioners' attention to certain specific political issues. Interest in these issues eventually grew, and after some 2 years time, a base community was indeed formed.

Comunidade-Unnamed

Background Characteristics: The group admittedly, is rather small, and has attracted only about 10 individuals. Most of these are between 30 and 50 years of age, and all are earning well above 10 MS.

Goals and Activities: The CEB is organized around a single political cause: the plight of the Guarani Indians who inhabit the coastal areas of São Paulo state. Members seek both to reflect among themselves on the problems faced by the Indians, and to offer material aid to the Guarani who are fighting to obtain full citizenship rights under the Brazilian constitution. Regardless of their actual age, Indians in Brazil are legally considered as minors, and all

are under the protection of the Federal Government's National Indian Foundation (FUNAI). While their legal status has undeniably afforded them certain benefits, (eg. they are immune from criminal prosecution), they are restricted from partaking in the political life of the nation.

Organizational Structure: As the group is quite small, its organization and leadership structures are rather basic. The CEB has no conselho, nor does it possess any formal teams or sub-groups. All activities are simply coordinated by the parish priest himself, Pe. Luiz, who serves in effect as chairman and spiritual director of the group.

The comunidade moreover, has no fixed meeting times. Generally speaking, Pe. Luiz calls the membership together only as he deems necessary to discuss some specific problems or concrete plan of action. In accordance with the priest's wishes, religious content at such encounters is minimal. There are in fact few clues suggesting that the origin of the CEB's concern for the Indians is Church-related.

During the researcher's stay in the group, participants met on two occasions to confer with a group of Guarani tribal chiefs who were supposedly interested in arranging a major conference of local indigenous leaders. Group participants hoped that by helping to stage such an encounter, the chiefs could be induced as well to form

a class association which might work more effectively to secure native rights.

Institutional Relations: The CEB is operated, as might be gathered, under intense clerical scrutiny. The group after all, was the creation of Pe. Luiz, and for the most part he alone remains in charge of its affairs. It was he for example, who originally chose the Guarani as the CEB's central cause, and it is he who decides when and why group meetings should be held.

To help direct the CEB, Pe. Luiz does however sometimes rely upon a nun named Irmã Clara, who is familiar with the plight of the Guarani and who visits the group from time to time. In the traditional sense, Irmã Clara is somewhat more religiously oriented than Pe. Luiz, and works diligently to compensate for the priest's apparent lack of concern with other-worldly matters. At one meeting for instance, the priest insisted that the Guarani be called by their 'real' Indian names, and not by their Portuguese Christian ones. Pulling Pe. Luiz aside, the nun quietly explained the impropriety of such a demand. "Their Indian names," she explained,

are for close personal friends and family only, for people who know them intimately. Thus, they may easily distinguish friends from strangers. It would be wrong in any case to drop their Portuguese names, as these were the ones given them at baptism, and the Indians have consequently invested them with a sacred character (Field notes, 1-1, 4/6/84).

Despite such differences in ideological orientation, Pe. Luiz and Irmã Clara demonstrate near identical tendencies in their attitudes towards the group's lay members. Both are in fact somewhat autocratic and patronizing. While participants are encouraged to speak their minds at meetings for example, (and in fact rarely fail to do so), what they say does not appear to carry much weight. Pe. Luiz in particular frequently interjects to correct lay participants, even when the latter clearly have the floor. At times moreover, he will even change the direction of the discussion, thanking the speaker for his or her comments before they have actually made their point.

Similarly, the two Church agents are quite paternalistic in their dealings with the Indians, exhibiting behaviour which would appear to contradict group goals of helping the Guarani to assert their own identity. With the tribal chiefs present for instance, Clara proudly stated that the Guarani were probably the most pacific of all Brazilian Indians because of their faith in Christ. Roman Catholicism, she went on, is in fact the saving grace of the Guarani, and should in no way be seen as a cultural imposition (Field notes, 1-1, 4/6/84).

For his part, Pe. Luiz as well has little patience with the Indians, as often demanding as merely suggesting that they undertake certain courses of action. It was Pe. Luiz for example, who first insisted that the Guarani form

their own class association. In addition, it was the priest's idea that the tribal chiefs should meet immediately to plan strategy. While the Guarani initially balked at this latter suggestion, arguing that too few chiefs could be interested in attending at such short notice, they later capitulated to the priest's demands in the face of his unrelenting insistence (Field notes, 1-1, 4/6/84).

In closing, it should also be noted that under Pe. Luiz' direction, the CEB has effectively been isolated from contact with other similar groups or Church personnel. The comunidade maintains no ties with neighbouring lay groups, nor has it ever participated in CEB-related conferences at any level.

Part II: Região São Miguel

Paróquia Nossa Senhora Aparecida

Our first set of middle-class CEBs to be examined from São Miguel Region are found in Nossa Senhora Aparecida, one of the oldest and most prestigious parishes in all of São Paulo. Nossa Senhora Aparecida is a strictly urban parish, and its 20,000 inhabitants are predominantly of middle to lower middle-class origin. About 44 percent of residents in the general area earn in the 5 to 12 MS range, while another 11 percent take home in excess of 12 MS.

Since 1974, the parish has been administered by C^onego Cl^audio, a 48 year-old Brazilian-born diocesan priest. C^onego Cl^audio has spent most of his clerical career working in middle-class parishes and consequently has little experience with either the lower-classes or the CEBs per se. He is however, a staunch supporter of the groups, and believes that they "are going to change Brazilian society," insofar as they represent "the power of the little guy," (Int. SM-7, 2/14/84).

Like other priests working in similar areas, C^onego Cl^audio is fully aware of the difficulties involved in stimulating CEB formation among the middle-classes. For the most part, he attempts to encourage the groups through what he terms propaganda massista (verbal encouragement through the mass). More concretely, he also attempted, some 6 years ago, to artificially create a number of CEBs by subdividing the parish into 6 separate sectors. Lay groups within each of these zones were subsequently given a certain degree of autonomy to pursue whatever goals their members desired. All but 2 of the 6 CEBs originally formed are now extinct however, having disappeared due to a lack of parishoner interest.

Comunidade Santa Helena

Background Characteristics: One of the two currently surviving groups is the Comunidade Santa Helena. This CEB is

located in a rather isolated neighbourhood bounded on all four sides by railway tracks and expressways. Most residents of this enclave (57%) are lower middle-class, earning in the 5 to 12 MS range. Only about 10 percent fall within the lowest income bracket of 5 MS and under.

Presently, there are a total of 20 to 30 participants in the CEB. Some 40 percent of these are under 29 years of age, while another 40 percent are over 50. Most (61%) moreover are women, as in many of the groups discussed thus far.

Given the locale, reported earnings within the CEB are rather low, with approximately 44 percent of group members' families taking home between 2 and 5 MS, and another 27 percent 2 MS or under. Yet, the occupational profile of group participants (some 70 percent of whom are employed in white collar jobs), places them firmly within middle-class ranks.⁵ To some extent, the low reported incomes may be attributable to the relatively high percentage of retirees in the group (28 percent of participants are retired). It is also altogether likely that members' incomes have simply been understated. This is in fact a common practice among middle-class Brazilians who wish to avoid paying income taxes.

Goals and Activities: In terms of the range of activities which it undertakes, the Comunidade Santa Helena shares a good deal in common with more developed CEBs on the

periphery. Religious activities do admittedly receive the most attention within the CEB, although political functions, of a certain type at least, are hardly avoided.

Within the religious sphere, members engage in a variety of tasks. They prepare weekly celebrações and occasional baptisms, participate in Bible study and reflection, offer religious instruction to the young, charity to the poor, and plan festivals to mark holy days.

Political activities by contrast, are slightly more limited in scope, and tend to be of a slightly different quality than those undertaken in lower-class CEBs. Consciousness-raising, first of all, is frequently practiced, but reportedly intensifies only as political themes suggest themselves in discussion materials or everyday life. During extensive flooding which occurred in 1983 for example, members considered the plight of local favelados and others who had been adversely affected. Moreover, although revindicações have never been undertaken by the group, members do occasionally participate in self-help projects known as mutirões. For instance, when the members' own homes were flooded the year previous, all pitched in to repair damages. Finally, CEB participants have also formed a kind of community watch, and keep each other informed of suspicious occurrences, or the presence of strangers in the neighbourhood.

Organizational Structure: The organizational structure of the Comunidade Santa Helena is highly evolved. Firstly, there are a number of functional sub-groups or teams (not unlike those in many poor comunidades) which are responsible for carrying out group functions. Separate teams currently exist for young people, religious instruction, fund-raising, liturgy, baptismal preparation, festival day planning, and charity.

In charge of the group moreover, is a central directorate or conselho which consists of the leaders of the CEB's various teams, plus a treasurer and central coordinator who are elected at large from within the membership. Conselho meetings, which occur once a month, serve both a religious and secular purpose. During encounters, time is allowed not only for team progress and financial reports, but for prayer, song, and reflection as well. This last activity is usually undertaken without special materials, and is based entirely on readings from the Bible. At the close of each meeting, coffee and biscuits are served, and members chat amiably among themselves for an hour or so before going home.

As in many of the CEBs discussed in the last Chapter, there are furthermore, no general membership meetings. Decisions taken by the conselho consequently, must be passed along to ordinary participants at the close of the group's celebrações.

The celebrações themselves are held once a week and are open to all area residents. Normally, they are performed by one of the priests from the parish, since the CEB possesses no lay ministers of its own as yet. Rather interestingly no liturgical pamphlets are ever used during the celebrações. Services are prepared in their entirety by the CEB's liturgy team in conjunction with the celebrant.

Worship services finally, and indeed all group meetings, are held in the CEB's own community centre. This is a rather impressive structure, built by the membership (using hired labour) on land owned by the central curia. As it is somewhat rare for middle-class groups to possess such a hall, the building itself occupies a central place in the hearts of CEB members. One group leader named Célia went so far as to claim that the "fight for the community centre," at one time represented one of the group's central objectives (Resp. 3-2: 1, 2/21/84).

Institutional Relations: As pointed out earlier, the Comunidade Santa Helena is essentially the creation of the parish pastor, Cônego Cláudio. Currently however, it operates under extremely weak clerical control. While Cônego Cláudio is still considered to be its spiritual director, decisions regarding group activities are left exclusively to the CEB's conselho. The conselho, claimed one of its members, is merely responsible for informing the priest

regularly of any changes in the structure of direction of the group (Resp. 3-2: 1, 2/21/84).

The CEB's other institutional linkages, by contrast, tend to be somewhat more regulated. So far, the group has been represented at CEB-related encounters up to and including the state level, and it maintains frequent contact with CEBs and other types of lay groups within parish boundaries.

Comunidade-Unnamed

Background Characteristics: The other surviving CEB in Nossa Senhora Aparecida parish is an unnamed group which is really little more than the remnant of the original comunidade formed by the local pastor 6 years ago. Most members live in a middle to lower middle-class neighbourhood in which 29 percent of resident families earn between 5 and 12 MS, and another 23 percent take home over 12 MS.

Approximately 12 individuals of all ages regularly partake in the group's activities. Exactly half of these are women, with an identical portion of members' families earning in the above average income category of 10 MS and higher.

Goals and Activities: The CEB regularly undertakes but a few, primarily religious activities. These include Bible study, charity work (members send money to an impoverished parish in Northeastern Brazil), and reflection. Political

consciousness-raising is also practiced, but to a rather limited extent.

Organizational Structure: As in most small groups of this type, organization and leadership structures are fairly basic. Group activities for example, are planned and undertaken by all participants together at weekly meetings. These are normally held at the home of a member. Typically, CEB encounters open with singing, followed by a period of spontaneous prayer. A Bible passage is then read (selected at random) and discussed. This is followed by more singing and additional prayer, until finally coffee and biscuits are served. No prepared discussion materials or agenda, it should be added, are ever employed. Hymns however, are occasionally taken from a standard Church hymn-book entitled Louvemos O Senhor (Praise the Lord).

As regards leadership per se, the CEB has no conselho, nor do its members admit to the existence of any informal lay directors. Nevertheless, it is quite clear that one married couple in particular dominates the group. The couple, whose names are João and Luiza, were previously involved with the Charismatic Renewal Movement,⁶ but claimed to have become dissatisfied with its extremely conservative outlook. They decided consequently, to participate in the work of the CEBs which they claimed offer a more authentic way to practice their faith (Resp. 3-1: 1, 3/1/84).

João and Luiza's control over the CEB is manifested primarily through the manner in which they alone control the pace of encounters and work to orient group discussions. During one reflective period for example, a member questioned the Church's new-found 'option for the poor' and the current diminished emphasis within the Church on traditional religious practices. Luiza immediately seized the opportunity to chastize the participant, arguing that such practices in themselves were shallow:

I remember when I was in school and the nuns would lead us to mass, and teach us to say the terço, trezenas, and Hail Mary's, and all these things were done without even thinking.

"But shouldn't we be doing these things?" asked the participant, "Yes, of course," responded Luiza, "but people should think about and understand what they are doing and saying," (Field notes, 3-1, 3/1/84).

Though they claimed to have rejected the basic tenets of the movement, such attempts at directing the CEB appear furthermore, to be flavoured considerably by the couple's previous brush with Charismatic Renewal. Directly political topics such as unemployment, or abandoned minors are rarely touched upon, and political action is mentioned only in the context of being a good Christian individual (i.e. as opposed to jointly engaging in a concrete project to help the poor to help themselves). In addition, João and Luiza work constantly to maintain a heavy emphasis within the CEB on

spontaneous prayer, a central activity in most Charismatic groups.

Institutional Relations: Like the Comunidade Santa Helena, the CEB maintains a fair degree of autonomy from the parish church. Cônego Cláudio is not directly involved with the group, nor for that matter is he considered its spiritual director. The CEB, claimed its members, is a self-sustaining unit, and thus there is little need for the pastor to be present (Field notes 3-1, 3/1/84).

CEB members have not however shunned all contact with other institutional organs or representatives. It maintains regular contact with local lay groups, and has occasionally sent delegates to CEB conferences (albeit only as far as the sectoral level).

Paróquia São Marcos

Our next two CEBs are part of the São Marcos parish, situated in an urban middle-class area to the north of Nossa Senhora Aparecida. São Marcos has a population of approximately 40,000. In the general area, about 30 percent of all families earn over 12 MS per month, with another 20 percent in the 5 to 12 MS bracket.

The parish has been administered for the past 3 years by a 27 year-old Brazilian-born diocesan priest named Pe. Lourival. Since his arrival in São Marcos, the priest has

worked hard to transform the parish into a real community, in accordance with the desires of Regional bishop Dom Angélico Bernardino. Pe. Lourival's first act was to encourage parishoners to conceive of their parish church as a type of mother CEB. He then changed the names of all existing lay circles (which had been predominantly religiously oriented) to grupos de rua, and ordered them to begin using the highly politicized discussion materials from the Regional curia (see Chapter IV, Part II).

At first, the parish was convulsed by the dramatic changes which the priest had introduced, and many lay circles simply voted themselves out of existence rather than engage in 'politics'. "In the beginning," Pe. Lourival explained, "there was a clearing out, since they [lay group members] would not accept the texts from the Region." In time however, the situation began to turn around. As the priest related, "even though lay groups diminished in quantity, they were enhanced in quality," (Int. SM-4, 5/2/84).

Another of Pe. Lourival's modifications to the parish was the appointment of a lay coordinator to watch over the newly formed grupos de rua. This, he claimed, was done to reduce the possibility of excessive clerical control. The lay coordinator, an itinerant clothing salesman named Oscar, was claimed by the priest as a recent convert to the 'new' Church. Where formerly Oscar had been interested only in observing traditional religious practices, Pe. Lourival

believes that he has now firmly embraced the Church's 'preferential option for the poor'.

In actual fact however, Oscar does not appear to be as thoroughly enamoured of recent Church teaching as the local pastor seems to think. Granted, in some respects, he does indeed approve of the Church's political stance. In his explanation of the manner in which the Church effects social change for example, he shares a good deal in common with Regional bishop Dom Angélico. "The Church is politicized," stated Oscar,

but it doesn't practice politics itself. It does so however through the people who are active in the unions, housing movements, transports, etc., all of whom are oriented towards faith, with God at the centre (Int. SM-2, 5/24/84).

Nevertheless, Oscar continues to exhibit certain conservative tendencies, and is extremely devout in the traditional sense. He would not for instance, consent to a meeting, or even converse on the telephone with the researcher until such time as he received authorization from the local pastor to do so. Oscar repeatedly asked the researcher moreover, if his work was in any way connected with communism, and expressed the hope that the researcher might some day find God through his studies (Field notes, 3-4, 5/3/84).

Such ideological confusion on the part of Oscar is clearly stamped as well onto the very nature of the 17 or so parish grupos de rua for which he is responsible. In their

essential form at least, they attempt (as does Oscar) to conform to the dictates of Pe. Lourival and the Region, but internally cling to traditional religious ways. This has caused a fair bit of tension within many of the groups, and consequently, they share much in common with certain ideologically split lower-class CEBs which we examined in the previous Chapter.

Grupo de rua São Lucas

Background Characteristics: The first group which we shall investigate is rather typical of most parish grupos de rua and is approximately 5 years old. Currently, it has about 12 to 17 members, most of whom are over 40. About half moreover, are women, and nearly all members' families earn in the 5 to 10 MS range.

Goals and Activities: In practice, this grupo de rua is oriented primarily towards activities of a religious nature. Members regularly engage in Bible study, reflection, and offer charitable aid to an impoverished family living in a nearby favela. Celebrações are also prepared and offered, but on an occasional basis only.

In accordance with Pe. Lourival's wishes, political consciousness-raising is attempted as well, but with mixed results. The group furthermore, did one time help to launch a local revindicação, which however, ultimately failed. As a

group leader explained:

The group once participated in an action, initiated by Pe. Lourival, to relieve the chronic flooding in the area, but it fell through (Resp. 3-4: 1, 5/29/84).

Organizational Structure: The leadership structure of the group is rather elementary. It has no conselho, but is led by a single lay coordinator named Inácia, who was originally selected for the job by parish lay group organizer, Oscar. Inacia, it might be added, holds her position with a certain sense of reluctance, and openly expressed a desire to see broader member participation in the leadership of the group. Few others however, she stated, are really interested in taking her place. "I would like it," Inacia explained,

if the leadership were changed once in a while, if only to avoid the petrification of the group; but no one wants to assume the position of coordinator, so here I remain (Resp. 3-4: 1, 5/29/84).

Like its leadership structure, the organization of basic functions within the grupo de rua São Lucas is extremely uncomplicated. Activities are undertaken by all participants together at weekly meetings, held at the home of the coordinator. As in other similar groups, such encounters involve a mixture of prayer, song, Bible reading, reflection, and socializing.

Once a month, in addition to these regular membership meetings, celebrações are performed by a lay minister from within the group. Somewhat unusually, these are not however

open to all area residents, and only regular group participants may attend.

During both the celebrações and the weekly group meetings, prepared discussion materials or agenda are normally used. In the case of religious services, the liturgical pamphlet Povo de Deus em São Paulo is employed, as mandated by Pe. Lourival. During the regular weekly meetings, members are supposed to use the various booklets and discussion aids sent from the Regional curia. In actual fact however, such material, because of its highly politicized content, is only employed subject to the informal approval of a majority of group members. "When the material arrives," claimed Inácia, "we decide to stay with it or to change. Sometimes we will decide to change if a lot of people don't accept it," (Resp. 3-4: 1, 5/29/84).

The non-acceptance of Regional materials on the part of more than a few participants causes in fact quite a bit of strain within the group, just as occurs in many CEBs on the periphery. One grupo de rua member stated categorically that group participants simply became invisible when forced to deal with politically controversial materials:

There are lots of people who participate, who come to the meetings of the group, participate in decision-making, but when the time comes for discussion, they walk out and participate no more. There is a lot of animosity between people because of this (Resp. 3-4: 2, 5/3/84).

Inácia herself refused to admit that the problem is indeed that serious, but did confess that the more politically oriented booklets from the Region do create an atmosphere ill-conducive to the cohesiveness of the group. "Not a lot of people," she stated,

have stayed away from our group because of the booklets, but I know that many people do not like them. You know, the reality of the periphery is really quite different from ours. The language is really more appropriate for there than here (Resp. 3-4: 1, 5/29/84).

Institutional Relations: The grupo de rua São Lucas is only loosely supervised by the local pastor. Pe. Lourival does not himself for example, participate directly in group activities, nor is he considered the spiritual director of the group. What information he does receive with regard to group problems or undertakings must come to him indirectly through Oscar, lay group organizer of the parish.

The group's other institutional links are similarly limited. While members do regularly participate with other grupo de rua participants in parish functions, they have not to date attended CEB-related conferences at any level of Church government.

Grupo de rua-Unnamed

Background Characteristics: The next grupo de rua which we shall describe was formed some 6 years ago and presently has about 8 to 10 members. Most of these, somewhat surprisingly,

are men, nearly all of whom are over 50 years of age. Family earnings of group participants are in the 5 to 10 MS range.

Goals and Activities: Of all the grupos de rua in São Marcos, this is the only group which has reportedly avoided the controversy surrounding the forced politicization of the parish. Due to the sheer obstinance of its members, the group has managed to steer clear of Pe. Lourival's political rhetoric, and pursues strictly religious ends. Somewhat ironically, this is also the group to which Oscar, Pe. Lourival's lay assistant, belongs. Quite obviously, Oscar has no intention of himself participating in the same politically oriented activities which he appears to encourage in other parish grupos de rua.

The purpose of the group, a member stated, is simply "to learn more in the religious sense, [and] to deepen the faith," (Resp. 3-3: 2, 5/8/84). Accordingly, the grupo de rua's central activities are Bible reading, reflection, and to a lesser extent charity work. Even seemingly innocuous political activities such as consciousness-raising are never attempted. "We do not," a participant stated, "mix religion with politics," (Resp. 3-3: 1, 5/8/84).

Organizational Structure: The group has no central directorate or conselho, but is run by a single lay coordinator named Adriano. Originally appointed by fellow

group member Oscar, Adriano has sole responsibility for arranging meeting times, and organizing group encounters.

Group meetings are held every 15 days at the home of a member. Encounters usually open with a prayer, followed by Bible reading, informal discussion and the socializing. No liturgical pamphlets or prepared discussion materials of any kind are ever employed. In keeping with group aims moreover, themes offered for discussion during the researcher's time in the grupo de rua were purely religious in nature, and political topics were generally avoided. At one encounter for example, members read a passage from John, Chapter V, regarding atheism. Subsequent discussion focused primarily on whether or not an atheist could be considered spiritually dead (Field notes, 3-3, 5/8/84).

Institutional Relations: While the group is exclusively religious in the traditional sense, its ties to the institutional Church are extremely fragile. It does not, first of all, maintain any links with other lay groups, nor has it ever been represented at a CEB-related encounter.

Moreover, because it pursues ends contrary to those desired by the local pastor, Pe. Lourival, its relations with the parish church are rather strained. "We really don't have much to do with the parish," explained Adriano, who added as well that the group even refuses to refer to itself as a

grupo de rua (supposedly because of the political connotation of the term).

Strangely enough though, as we mentioned earlier, one of the group's principal members is Oscar, Pe. Lourival's right-hand man. Oscar's involvement with the group appears however to be personally motivated, and is merely a testament to his true religious beliefs. In all probability he has no intention of bringing the group into conformity with the local pastor's wishes, but simply uses it as a kind of refuge where he may freely practice his own particular brand of faith.

Part III: Região SÉ

Paróquia Nossa Senhora de Fatima

The first two CEBs to be examined in SÉ Region are located in Nossa Senhora de Fatima parish. Situated in one of the more fashionable areas of São Paulo, its approximately 40,000 inhabitants are solidly middle-class. Fully 60 to 70 percent of residents in the general area earn in the 12 MS and above range.

The pastor of the parish is 45 year-old Frei Michel, a friar of the Terceira Ordem Regular order. Frei Michel is a French missionary who has spent much of his clerical career working among the peasantry in the rural interior of Brazil. He has been in his present position since 1979.

Frei Michel claimed that during his first 5 years in Nossa Senhora de Fatima, he has fought hard to create a sense of community, and has stalwartly promoted CEB activation among his parishoners. The principal aims of his work with the groups, the priest stated, have been many. Specifically, he has sought to: 1) bring the marginalized into the mainstream of society; 2) facilitate the growth of faith; 3) evangelize; and 4) encourage fraternity among the parish population (Int. SE-2, 1/26/84).

The priest is quite clear moreover, as to the kinds of themes, of both a religious and political nature, which should be focused upon within CEBs in his parish. The groups, he has written, should:

get to know the environment, and attend to common necessities of children, adolescents, students, the sick, the poor, as well as those for leisure and green space.

Attention should be also be paid, he stated,

to the necessities of the parish; the Pastoral of Violence, of Injustice, the Working World, Vocations, Communication, Married Couples, the Periphery, and so forth (Paroquia Nossa Senhora de Fatima, 1983: 9).

It is not absolutely necessary though, Frei Michel has said, that middle-class CEBs adopt an explicitly political stance, as do many groups on the periphery. Parish CEBs may instead, if they so desire, be oriented solely towards more basic religious ends such as fraternity or charity (Int. SE-2, 1/26/84).

The priest attempts to promote CEB formation in his parish through existing lay circles and publications. The CEBs for example, are dealt with at length in the parochial pastoral plan published each year. In addition, the groups are a central concern of the parish C.I.V.C. (Intensive Course for Christian Living) from which many present CEB leaders have in fact graduated.

In the final analysis, Frei Michel's strategy for stimulating the CEBs appear to have paid off to some extent at least. In addition to the more than 30 conventional parish circles and courses which have traditionally operated in Nossa Senhora de Fatima, some 5 middle-class CEBs have emerged since the priest's arrival.

Comunidade Sagrado Coração

Background Characteristics: One such CEB is the Comunidade Sagrado Coração. This group was originally formed in 1971 as a Bible study circle, but recently reoriented itself to conform more closely with Frei Michel's definition of a comunidade. Currently, the group consists of 11 married couples. Nearly all participants are in the 30 to 49 age group, and approximately one-half of members' families reportedly earn in excess of 10 MS.

Goals and Activities: While group members claimed to occasionally engage in political consciousness-raising,

religious activities would appear to predominate within the CEB. Its two major functions are in fact Bible study and reflection, although there is some emphasis placed on charity work. The CEB has for example, adopted a creche (day care centre) in one of the poor neighbourhoods on the periphery which it supplies with food and other basic necessities. In addition to the above functions, the Comunidade Sagrado Coração publishes the parish newsletter, and occasionally helps to organize festive days or bazaars which are held at the parish church.

Organizational Structure: The organizational structure of the CEB is extremely basic. To begin with, it has no conselho but is directed rather informally by a clerically appointed coordinator named Fernando. Fernando directs the group in conjunction with his wife, and another married couple who have completed the parish C.I.V.C.

Aside from this small steering body, there are no teams or sub-groups charged with specific responsibilities. The group simply meets together once a month at the home of a member to undertake and plan CEB activities. These encounters tend to follow a rather strict format from which there is little deviation. Normally, they begin with a prayer, followed by the presentation of a Biblical passage which had been selected at the previous meeting. Participants then read in turn from prepared texts, written

before the encounter, offering their comments on the material in question. During the next stage of the meeting, members are entreated to explain how their faith has been altered during the previous month. This is usually the weakest part of the encounter, according to group leader Fernando, and few participants in fact respond in any detail. Members tend to move quickly therefore to the third stage of the meeting, called the 'study period'. It is during this time that conversation becomes more informal, offering participants an opportunity to deal with more political themes should they wish to do so. During the study period at one meeting for example, members discussed the gradually worsening situation of the poor who, it was offered, are experiencing the brunt of the current economic recession in Brazil (Field notes, 2-1, 3/17/84). At the close of the study period, those present briefly discuss financial matters related to the operation of the nursery which they help to fund, or any other parish-related business. Following this, the Biblical selection to be discussed at the next encounter is announced, prayers offered, and refreshments served.

CEB encounters, it might be added, tend to take on a somewhat festive atmosphere, unlike anything witnessed in other groups. Much of the time members actually spend together is occupied not in reflection, but in greeting (each couple must either kiss or shake hands with all present upon

entering), chatting informally over coffee, and in saying goodbye.

Institutional Relations: Like many of the middle-class CEBs discussed thus far, the Comunidade Sagrado Coração maintains a fair degree of autonomy from the parish church. Frei Michel rarely visits the group, nor does he interfere with its activities. He is instead simply made aware of its progress through Fernando, the CEB's coordinator.

Beyond the parish, the group's ties to other institutional agencies or representatives are similarly weak. While it does regularly participate with neighbouring lay groups in coordinating local festive and religious activities, it has never sent delegates to hierarchically sponsored CEB encounters at any level.

Comunidade Divino Salvador

Background Characteristics: Our next CEB, the Comunidade Divino Salvador, is some 4 years old, and has approximately 20 members. The majority (75%) are over 40, and most again (75%) are women. Given extant patterns of income distribution in the area, family earnings within the group seem rather low, at 10 MS or under. In all probability however, such a statistic is attributable to income under-reporting, as virtually all CEB members or the heads of their families are employed in white collar occupations.⁷

Goals and Activities: The overriding purpose of the CEB, stated a group leader, is religious. "We seek to put Christ inside our lives," he explained,

to know the environment, to aid our neighbours, and to illuminate life with the Word of God (Resp. 2-4: 1, 2/7/84).

Heading the CEB's list of principal activities is Biblical reflection, although members do frequently engage as well in charity work, purchasing food for the needy and supplying medicine to a brain-damaged youth who resides in the neighbourhood. Participants also occasionally plan parties in celebration of holy days.

More political activities are generally avoided. On an individual basis, some members do however participate in various parish-level Pastorals such as that of the Periphery, the Working World, and so forth.

Organizational Structure: Like many other middle-class groups, the CEB maintains no task-oriented teams or sub-groups. All members simply meet together once a month at a member's home to pursue the CEB's major functions. These encounters follow a pattern similar to that described previously in the Chapter. Normally, they open with a prayer, followed by a hymn of two, Bible reading, reflection (using locally produced materials), and refreshments. Time is usually set aside as well for group business, such as the collection and distribution of charitable aid.

Where the activities of the Comunidade Divino Salvador are thus few and relatively uncomplicated, the CEB's leadership structure is rather complex. The group in fact possesses a highly formalized conselho, which consists of 5 elected lay members. Somewhat uncharacteristically moreover, the conselho does not meet separately from the membership, as in other similarly directed CEBs. Rather, it conducts its business in full view of all group participants at the regular monthly meetings.

Each member of the conselho is assigned to a specific task, and holds a specific title. There is, to be exact, a President, who is responsible for the overall coordination of the group; a Vice-president, who assists the group leader as necessary; a Treasurer, who looks after the CEB's operating budget; a Secretary, who is responsible for recording the minutes of meetings and arranging discussion materials; and a Vice-secretary, who fills in for the Secretary when he or she is absent.

Institutional Relations: The Comunidade Divino Salvador was initiated personally by parish priest Frei Michel, who in fact remains the spiritual director of the group. He is not however, a current member of the CEB's conselho, nor does he attend group meetings. Thus, the CEB is relatively free of direct clerical control. The only proscription placed on the group by Frei Michel, a conselho member claimed, was that

"the directorate be changed around once in a while." This stipulation was made, he added, to help ensure that the membership would participate fully in the group decision-making process (Resp. 2-4: 2, 2/7/84).

The Comunidade Divino Salvador does maintain slightly closer ties with Church groups and representatives other than the local pastor. Not only does it participate with other neighbouring lay groups and CEBs in planning parish activities, it has occasionally sent representatives to CEB related encounters beyond parish boundaries. To date, delegates have appeared on behalf of the CEB at meetings up to and including the Regional level.

Paróquia Nossa Senhora do Carmo

The last 2 CEBs which we shall describe in this Chapter are found in the parish of Nossa Senhora do Carmo. This Church precinct has a population of approximately 70 to 80,000, and like the one described previously, is situated in an extremely affluent district of São Paulo. Of all families living in the area, some 60 to 70 percent earn in the 12 MS and above range.

Administering Nossa Senhora do Carmo is a 56 year-old Brazilian-born religious priest (Ordem dos Ministros do Enfermo) named Pe. Albino. Pe. Albino has spent approximately 18 years in the parish, and has no previous

work experience on the periphery, or with lower-class CEBs specifically.

The priest's views on the CEB phenomenon in general are rather conservative. Contrary to Cardinal Arns, he does not for example, believe that groups must possess a political element. Instead he claims, it is fraternity which defines a CEB. Thus the groups may legitimately exist within any social class, providing at least that they strive to create and enhance a sense of community among their members.

Within his own parish, Pe. Albino has been extremely active in the area of CEB promotion, and to date has helped to form some 11 groups. Ten of these are now over 5 years old. The essential structure and orientation of these CEBs has been tightly controlled. The priest has in fact produced a basic manual which all existing groups must follow. This he has entitled Constitution of Basic Christian Communities.

On page one of the document are listed no less than 14 basic criteria which Pe. Albino has deemed necessary to the development of CEBs in the parish. A few of the requirements which the groups must fulfill are the following:

- 1) they must begin with an active nucleus;
- 2) they are to be heterogeneous in terms of the age and sex of their members;
- 3) they must act in a neighbourly fashion within and between themselves;
- 4) they are to promote the formation of lay ministers;
- 5) they must seek to offer as many of the sacraments as possible; and
- 6) they must take care to

maintain close ties with the Church. No requirements are listed however, which deal with the necessity of social and political consciousness-raising, or with community action.

To those who would accuse the priest of seeking to control the CEB phenomenon within his parish, Pe. Albino makes no apologies. As he explains on page 8 of his Constitution, clerical interference in CEB development is not only desirable, but imperative:

The reality of our times demands of priests the force to surpass the human limits of their training. They must know that a parish which can't count on the priest as an enthusiastic promoter of comunidades can do little in terms of adult evangelization.

Comunidade Santa Cruz

Background Characteristics: The first CEB which we shall investigate from the Nossa Senhora do Carmo parish is the Comunidade Santa Cruz. This CEB is about 9 years old and has approximately 10 to 15 members. Most of these are in the 40 to 60 age group, and a substantial portion (66%) are women. All members' families earn at least 10 MS.

Goals and Activities: The Comunidade Santa Cruz, like many middle-class groups, is oriented for the most part towards religious ends. Its activities within the religious sphere though, are much more developed than in most other groups. CEB members for example, regularly offer celebrações, and

occasionally prepare baptisms. Reflection is another important group function, as are religious instruction, and charity work. This latter activity usually takes the form of visits to the sick and elderly, and to cortiços who live in the immediate area. Finally, in addition to the above mentioned functions, the CEB holds socials to commemorate holy days, and undertakes romarias or pilgrimages to shrines in various parts of Brazil.

The CEB is also involved in certain political activities, although admittedly, these are rather limited. Consciousness-raising is for instance sometimes attempted, if discussion materials call for it. Moreover, though no revindicações have been executed, the group did once help a group of favelados in the Episcopal Region of Lapa to rebuild homes which had been destroyed by severe flooding.

Organizational Structure: The organizational structure of the Comunidade Santa Cruz is extremely well evolved. As in a number of lower-class groups for example, teams have been formed to carry out most of the CEB's activities. Specifically, there are separate sub-groups for religious instruction, visits to the sick and the cortiços (2 teams), reconciliation,⁸ maintenance of the CEB's community centre and environs (2 teams), fund-raising, and festival planning (2 teams). Each of these circles meets on a monthly basis at the very least. Sub-group encounters moreover, take place at

the CEB's community hall, which was built on Church-owned land with funds provided by the membership.

All of the participants and leaders of the CEB's various teams (i.e. the entire group) also meet together once a week. Typically, such encounters involve a mixture of song and prayer, followed by informal discussion of some Biblical passage. Pamphlets used during the meetings are either produced by the members themselves, or borrowed from one of the other 10 CEBs in the parish. It might be emphasized furthermore, that the themes chosen for reflection during weekly encounters can and do occasionally cross over into essentially political areas. One week for example, members began discussing love, and the sin of passing judgement on others. The conversation quickly turned however to questions of love for fellow man, social justice, and the necessity of denouncing arbitrary economic and political acts which discriminate against the poor (Field notes, 2-2, 2/28/84).

In addition to weekly CEB membership meetings, celebrações are offered each Sunday, and are open to all area residents. These services are planned and performed by the CEB's two lay ministers, who normally employ a liturgical pamphlet. (In this case it is Deus Conosco (God With Us), a rather conservative liturgical aid also used by Pe. Albino for the weekly church mass). At times, the celebrações can attract up to as many as 120 people, but usually do so only

when the celebrant is a priest. As one group leader named Marcia explained:

If the people come to the celebração and they see only lay ministers, they go home; and if the lay minister is a woman, forget it. I am sure that things must be much different on the periphery (Resp. 2-2: 1, 2/28/84).

All CEB activities finally, are directed by a conselho which convenes once a month, and consists of some 5 lay members elected at large from within the group. Within the conselho there are no specific tasks or positions as in some directorates previously examined. Instead, the conselho as a whole, so its members claimed, is responsible for group organization. Decisions taken by the conselho with respect to CEB functions moreover, are final, and consultation with the general membership occurs only rarely. This is especially true, stated a group leader, if a matter is particularly pressing (Resp. 2-2: 1, 2/28/84). Information is however, regularly passed to ordinary participants at weekly membership meetings or at the close of celebrações.

Institutional Relations: Parish pastor Pe. Albino is not now, nor has he ever been a member of the CEB's conselho; nor does he ever participate in group activities. Nevertheless, the group does operate under an indirect form of clerical control. It was Pe. Albino, first of all, who actually initiated the CEB, working through a married couple who were asked to interest others in forming their own comunidade.

Moreover, conselho members freely claimed that no decisions were ever taken which contravened the principles set out in the local pastor's CEB Constitution. Quite often in fact, they stated, the conselho consults directly with the priest on group-related matters (Resp. 2-2: 2, 3/15/84).

The CEB's contact with the parish priest is supplemented by other intra-institutional linkages. The Comunidade Santa Cruz participates frequently with other lay groups in parish level activities, and has sent delegates to CEB-related conferences from the parish to the Archdiocesan level.

Comunidade Nossa Senhora Esperança

Background Characteristics: The last CEB to be discussed is the Comunidade Nossa Senhora Esperança, which is about 10 years old and has approximately 15 members. Within the group, participants' ages tend to be fairly well distributed, with about one-half over 40 years of age, and one-half less than 40. A slight majority of members moreover, are women, and most participants' families earn in excess of 10 MS.

Goals and Activities: As in its sister CEB just described, activities within the Comunidade Nossa Senhora Esperança tend to be highly developed, but of a primarily religious nature. Specifically, members participate in the preparation of weekly celebrações, religious instruction, charity work (in

aid of the sick and local cortiços), reflection, religious festivals, and romarias (pilgrimages).

The political involvement of the CEB by contrast, is rather limited, although certainly far from non-existent. Some consciousness-raising for instance, is offered, as the opportunity is presented during discussion periods. In addition, the CEB runs its own food cooperative. Members purchase fruit and vegetables in bulk each day from the São Paulo central market (CEASA), and then offer it for sale at cost to local residents.

Organizational Structure: The leadership structure of the Comunidade Nossa Senhora Esperanca is highly defined. At the core of the CEB is a rather large conselho consisting of about 10 individuals. Six of these are elected at large from within the group, while the remaining half-dozen positions are reserved for the CEB's 6 lay ministers. The conselho meets once a month at the group's community centre (built by the membership on Church property), and itself directs most of the activities in which the group engages. Unlike the Comunidade Santa Cruz described previously, there are only 2 sub-groups or teams charged with special tasks. One is for religious instruction and the other for fund-raising.

In addition to the monthly conselho meetings, the CEB holds weekly membership encounters which serve a variety of purposes. Firstly, they provide an opportunity for decisions

made by the directorate to be communicated to ordinary CEB participants. Secondly, members may engage in reflection, which is usually undertaken using discussion materials generated at the local level. Consciousness-raising finally, is also undertaken at this time, especially if warranted by current events as reported in the media. At one encounter for example, members debated the validity of criticisms leveled against the method employed by the São Paulo Church in implementing its 'preferential option for the poor'. These criticisms appeared in a series of articles published in the influential O Estado de São Paulo, under the title of "Igreja, S.A." (see Chapter II). Essentially, the newspaper attempted to expose the tremendous wealth which the Archdiocese had amassed through its various tax-free business dealings. Group participants soundly condemned the series and the newspaper generally, arguing that the wealth of the Church, no matter how it is generated, goes exclusively to a good cause, i.e. the Pastorals, Commissions, and CEBs which defend the poor. In supporting their Church, most in fact agreed with one member's observation that the Archdiocese must maintain a constant source of income if it is to help the lower-classes. "If the Church were to sell all of its property," the participant claimed, "it would just be a drop in the bucket to those in need," (Field notes, 2-3, 2/24/84).

Celebrações, finally, are held every Sunday in the CEB's community hall. These services, as in most other

groups which offer them, are open to all area residents, and are conducted by the CEB's own lay ministers. In lieu of any formal liturgy team, celebrants rely exclusively moreover, on a liturgical pamphlet which in this case is Deus Conosco.

Institutional Relations: Like the Comunidade Santa Cruz, the Comunidade Nossa Senhora Esperanca operates under indirect clerical control. Though he only infrequently visits the CEB, Pe. Albino for example, himself nominates those individuals which he deems fit to become lay ministers. Those who accept his nomination, as was explained earlier, become 'ex officio' members of the group's conselho. It is generally expected moreover, a conselho member stated, that all actions planned, or decisions taken by group leaders will be fully discussed with Pe. Albino before implementation (Resp. 2-3: 2, 2/24/84).

Additionally, the group's other intra-institutional ties are perhaps the most extensive of any CEB considered thus far. Not only does the comunidade regularly participate in local parish functions with other neighbouring groups, it has regularly attended hierarchically sponsored CEB meetings all the way up to the national level.

Summary and Conclusions

Before moving on to a comprehensive analysis of lower and middle-class CEB-types (to be undertaken in the following

Chapter), it might be worthwhile to examine just how closely the more affluent groups themselves conform to the three research hypotheses posited in the first Chapter. Since the hypotheses are essentially directed towards the lower-class CEBs (the only genuine groups according to the grassroots view), one would expect that CEBs from among the middle-classes, as described in this Chapter, would not conform very closely with them. Indeed, this would appear to be the case, with perhaps but one exception.

First of all, insofar as the middle-class groups investigated in the Chapter are rather heterogeneous in terms of their goals (with moreover a decided slant towards religious activities), they definitely do not conform to the first hypothesis, i.e. that the CEBs are uniformly oriented, towards 'liberation'. Secondly, contrary to hypothesis two, they are not for the most part, inherently democratic. Many of the groups did not have conselhos, and those which were in place were not necessarily accountable to the membership.

Somewhat ironically though, the middle-class CEBs described in the Chapter did on the whole conform to hypothesis three, which states that the CEBs tend to maintain a certain autonomy from the institutional Church. Although a number did employ Church-produced liturgical aids, and did associate with other lay groups and pastoral agents at various levels of Church government, very few middle-class

CEBs were directly supervised by priests or nuns. The lack of institutional involvement in most groups did not signify however, that they were inherently moving in a socially or politically progressive direction, as grassroots theory seems to suggest. If anything, the exact opposite was true, with the institutionally accompanied CEBs engaged most dramatically in political action.

The fact that the middle-class groups do or do not conform to the hypotheses is perhaps less important in any case, than how their characteristics compare directly with those of the lower-class groups investigated earlier. It is only through an examination of the parallels and differences between the two CEB-types, we wish to once again emphasize, that the grassroots claim of a class-based and oriented CEB phenomenon can be most effectively disputed.

The question is therefore, just how different are the middle-class groups from their lower-class counterparts, and to what extent are existing dissimilarities, if any, attributable to class-based factors? To an appreciable degree, this question has already been answered in Chapter III where, upon examining aggregate group data, we concluded that affluent and poor CEBs were indeed quite similar. Based however, on the detailed qualitative information presented in this and the last Chapter, we should like, in the following section, to build upon and further explicate our initial findings.

NOTES

¹Parish population is based upon the local pastor's estimate. All subsequent references to parish size throughout this Chapter have been similarly derived.

²These statistics are for micro-areas of the Municipality of São Paulo, selected to correspond roughly with parish or CEB neighbourhood boundaries. All subsequent references to family incomes in neighbourhoods or parishes throughout this Chapter are derived from the source cited in the text.

³Data on CEB members' age, sex, and family income to be presented in this Chapter were gathered by means of questionnaire.

⁴The method was developed by Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, and was first applied among the poor in the Brazilian Northeast in the late 1950's. According to Freire, literacy training is ideally a group process, through which the poor learn not only to read and write, but to develop a critical consciousness of the world. For a full explanation of the Paulo Freire method, see his Pedagogy of the Oppressed (Freire, 1970).

⁵Family heads' occupations were reported by 11 of 16 respondents as follows: 3 small businessmen, 5 office workers, 1 salesman, 1 manager, and 1 professional.

⁶The Catholic Charismatic Movement is roughly equivalent to the 'born-again' phenomenon among Protestants. Its adherents seek greater intimacy with God, and ultimately yearn to 'fall into the spirit' of Christ. Highly emotional outbursts during prayer, and speaking in tongues are commonplace during Charismatic encounters. In Brazil, the Movement has made a profound impact among the middle-classes, especially in the interior of São Paulo state ('Fe carismática', 1983).

⁷Family heads' occupations were reported by 12 of 13 respondents as follows: 4 professionals, 1 salesman, 3 public servants, and 4 small businessmen.

⁸The activity undertaken in this sub-group is similar to reflection, but is conducted in a more personal fashion. In effect, the individual, in the presence of others, examines his or her own personal life in light of Biblical teaching.

CHAPTER SIX: A COMPARISON OF LOWER AND MIDDLE-CLASS CEBs

Introduction

In this Chapter, we shall provide one final test of our three research hypotheses, using the qualitative information on lower and middle-class CEBs presented in Chapters IV and V. In accordance with the analytical strategy outlined in Chapter I, we shall be looking for: a) qualities of the lower-class CEBs which directly prove or disprove each hypothetical claim with respect to group orientation or structure; and b) similarities between lower and middle-class groups which refute the hypotheses' central premise that CEB qualities are class-based. We shall for the first time moreover, attempt to examine a number of non-class related factors as possible predictors of the CEBs' basic nature and thrust.

In the pages which follow, the qualitative data on our 22 sample CEBs, as presented in the previous two Chapters, will be condensed into a series of summary tables. These will be analyzed in light of our three research hypotheses. Naturally, as we are dealing with overall group characteristics, there may be some overlap with the statistical data introduced in Chapter III. Here however, we hope to more thoroughly investigate the relationships between

variables initially suggested by the quantitative findings. It may be noted moreover, that the frequencies expressed in the summary charts to be presented, are in some cases slightly different than in corresponding tables in Chapter III. Such anomalies are far from serious though, and are simply attributable to differences in data gathering techniques. The statistical information presented in Chapter III was based entirely on lay leaders' responses to a closed-format questionnaire, and thus may be subject to slight error, omission, or distortion, depending upon the respondents' recollection or prejudices. The qualitative data by contrast, are rooted in the researcher's own day to day observations, and for this reason should offer a more objective and accurate insight into group activities.

Before proceeding to our examination of the hypotheses, it should be mentioned that throughout the Chapter, we shall occasionally refer to our two main CEB-types in abbreviated form, just as we did in Chapter III. The term 'lower-class CEB' consequently, may also appear as 'L-CEB' and 'middle-class CEB', as 'M-CEB'. These terms have been adopted solely in the interests of avoiding verbal clutter.

Hypothesis One: As a class-based and oriented phenomenon, the CEBs are an ideologically homogeneous collectivity (uniformly oriented toward the 'liberation' of the poor).

From the qualitative data on group activities presented in Chapters IV and V, we are now able to identify six sub-categories of lower and middle-class CEBs existing within our sample. These range from the simplest to the most developed in terms of their commitment to concrete political action as mandated by the 'new' Church, and secondarily, with respect to their adoption of more innovative religious activities:

Sub-type Ii - No political, basic religious: These CEBs engage in no types of political activity whatsoever, and indulge exclusively in basic religious practices such as Bible-reading, charity work, or reflection (or some combination of these three).

Sub-type Iii - No political, complex religious: Groups in this category also avoid political involvement, but engage in well developed religious functions such as liturgy or sacrament preparation, or at the very least, celebrações.

Sub-type IIIi - Some political, basic religious: These groups practice some political activities, primarily at the consciousness-raising level, but only limited religious ones (as in Sub-type Ii).

Sub-type IIIii - Some political, complex religious: CEBs of this type engage similarly in only limited political functions, but possess well developed religious ones as in

Sub-type Iii.

Sub-type IIIi - Community action, basic religious: Into this category fall CEBs which engage in some form of direct community action, but which have not moved beyond a few basic religious activities.

Sub-type IIIii - Community action, complex religious: This is the most evolved type of CEB in our sample. Such groups engage in highly developed forms of both political action (eg. revindicações) and religious undertakings.

In Table 6.1, both middle and lower-class CEBs are listed according to their group sub-type as outlined above. What is immediately apparent from the table is the heterogeneity of both L-CEBs and M-CEBs. Each class of CEB, as we see, spans the full range of group sub-types.

The frequency with which lower and middle-class CEBs appear in specific sub-categories does admittedly vary between the two types. Considered by themselves first of all, the L-CEBs show a strong proclivity for the most developed religious and political activities, with 6 of 11 groups in the highest sub-category. Any suggestion of L-CEB homogeneity is however seriously challenged by the fact that a corresponding number of the groups are clustered at the opposite end of the scale within the most elementary sub-types.

TABLE 6.1
 SUB-TYPES OF MIDDLE AND LOWER-CLASS CEBs
 (in numbers of groups)

Sub-types	M-CEBs (n = 11)	L-CEBs (n = 11)	
No political	basic religious	2	3
	complex religious	0	1
Some political	basic religious	3	1
	complex religious	4	0
Comm. Action	basic religious	1	0
	complex religious	1	6

The middle-class CEBs, for their part, are less prone to such extremes. They seem moreover, unlike the L-CEBs, reluctant to move beyond basic political activity, such as consciousness-raising. Nevertheless, it is important to note that fewer M-CEBs than L-CEBs fall within the most basic sub-categories, and perhaps more significantly, that at least 2 of the middle-class groups engage in direct forms of political action. While not involved in revindicações per se (as undertaken by CEBs on the periphery), the activities in which these latter 2 are engaged are appropriate to their social location, and are definitely in line with the Church's 'option for the poor'. It might be added as well that 3 of

the 4 CEBs within the 'some-political, complex religious' sub-category were active in certain low-key community projects such as mutirões (self-help schemes), food cooperatives, and neighbourhood watches. To a certain extent, they too then might be considered as approximating the most developed sub-types.

Certainly those M-CEBs which were politically engaged (even marginally so) appeared to be more comfortable with their role than similarly active L-CEBs. If for example, we condense our group sub-types into three broad categories based on political involvement (as we have done in Table 6.2), we see that ideological division is a predominantly lower-class phenomenon. While opposing conservative and politically progressive factions were clearly present in 3 of the 7 politically active L-CEBs, only 1 of the 9 middle-class groups was similarly split.

To the extent then that clear orientational differences exist within and between lower-class groups, and that few clear-cut divergences are present between these and their middle-class counterparts, our first hypothesis cannot be accepted with any degree of assurance. Social class in other words, is a less than perfect predictor of what types of activities may be undertaken by individual CEBs.

TABLE 6.2

IDEOLOGICAL DIVISION WITHIN LOWER AND MIDDLE-CLASS CEBs
(in numbers of groups)

Division	M-CEBs		L-CEBs	
	Some pol. (n = 7)	Comm. act. (n = 2)	Some pol. (n = 1)	Comm. act. (n = 6)
Present	1	0	0	3
Not present	6	2	1	3

In place of class, a number of other factors may however be offered as possible determinants of CEB orientation. We might hypothesize for example, that older groups, or larger CEBs may be more likely to assume more developed forms, or that groups in which females or older persons predominate may prefer more basic religious and political functions.

In Tables 6.3 and 6.4, we present four possible predictors of CEB orientation based precisely upon these characteristics. Each of the independent variables, i.e. group age, group size, members' sex, and members' age, have been dichotomized (in the manner indicated in the tables) for simplicity of analysis. The dependent variable, CEB subtype, was calculated as outlined previously.

TABLE 6.3

L-CEB SUB-TYPE PREDICTORS BASED UPON GROUP AND MEMBERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS

(in numbers of groups)

Sub-type	Group age		Group size		Members' sex		Members' age		
	Over 5 (n = 4)	Under 5 (n = 7)	Over 15 (n = 8)	Under 15 (n = 3)	Female (n = 10)	Nonfemale (n = 1)	Under 40 (n = 5)	Over 40 (n = 6)	
No political	Basic religious	1	2	1	2	3	0	1	2
	Complex religious	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1
Some political	Basic religious	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	1
	Complex religious	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Community Action	Basic religious	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Complex religious	2	4	6	0	5	1	4	2

TABLE 6.4

M-CEB SUB-TYPES PREDICTORS BASED UPON GROUP AND MEMBERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS

(in numbers of groups)

Sub-type	Group age		Group size		Members' sex		Members' age	
	Over 5 (n = 8)	Under 5 (n = 3)	Over 15 (n = 6)	Under 15 (n = 5)	Female (n = 4)	Nonfemale (n = 7)	Under 40 (n = 1)	Over 40 (n = 10)
No political	Basic religious	1	1	1	1	1	0	2
	Complex religious	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Some political	Basic religious	3	0	2	1	0	3	0
	Complex religious	4	0	2	2	2	0	4
Community Action	Basic religious	0	1	0	1	0	0	1
	Complex religious	0	1	1	0	0	1	0

We see first of all from both tables that age has no necessary or direct association with the proclivity of the CEBs to engage in the most developed forms of activity. For example, none of the 8 middle-class CEBs over 5 years of age are involved in community action, as are only 2 of the 4 most mature L-CEBs. Somewhat surprisingly, it is in fact the

newer groups within both CEB-types which are most likely to fall within our two highest sub-categories.

CEB size, and the percentage of women in the group are similarly poor predictors of CEB development. As can be seen from the two tables, there are roughly proportional numbers of large and small, female dominated and non-female dominated CEBs within each orientational sub-type. The only revealing factor is perhaps members' age. Looking first at the L-CEBs, (Table 6.3), we see that 4 of 5 groups in which the majority of participants are under 40 are engaged in both community action and complex religious activities. Such an observation would seem to be in keeping with previous studies which have linked youthfulness to politically progressive ideas. Unfortunately little can actually be said in the case of the M-CEBs, as the vast majority of these groups possess somewhat older members. The one youthful middle-class group which does exist however, also falls within the most evolved CEB sub-category. We might surmise therefore, that the numbers of M-CEBs engaged in community action would have been higher, had more groups with a younger membership been included in our sample.

What is perhaps the best predictor of CEB orientation has little to do however with members' age or other similar factors. Specifically, we are speaking of the role of Church agents, who as we saw throughout Chapters IV and V, often

maintain a strong presence within the CEBs. As this particular factor is associated with our third hypothesis though, we shall be forced to return to it at a later point. Let us first then deal with Hypothesis Two, and the relationship between social class and CEB leadership.

Hypothesis Two: As a class-based and oriented phenomenon, the CEBs are inherently democratic (offering opportunities for the full and equal participation of group members).

If we consider the CEBs of the poor in isolation first of all, there is at least some basis to support our second hypothetical claim. As we see in Table 6.5, 7 of the 11 CEBs examined possessed a well-developed leadership structure in the form of a conselho.

TABLE 6.5

LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE OF LOWER AND MIDDLE-CLASS CEBs

(in numbers of groups)

Type of Leadership	M-CEBs (n = 11)	L-CEBs (n = 11)
<u>Conselho</u>	5	7
Individual Church agent or lay appointee	6	4

When however, we take other factors into consideration, Hypothesis Two runs into substantial difficulty. One cannot ignore for example, the fact that 4 of the lower-class groups are run either by Church personnel directly, or by a clerically-appointed layperson, and are thus somewhat undemocratic. More significantly perhaps, the L-CEBs on the whole are no more democratically-run than their middle-class counterparts. Looking again at Table 6.5, we see that the M-CEBs are only slightly less likely to maintain formal lay directorates.

There may even be cause to suggest that the M-CEBs are in fact more egalitarian in terms of leadership than the CEBs of the poor. As Table 6.6 indicates, roughly four-fifths of the M-CEB conselhos contained some elected members, as compared with only one-seventh of L-CEB directorates. In

TABLE 6.6

ACCOUNTABILITY OF LOWER AND MIDDLE-CLASS CONSELHOS

(in numbers of groups)

Type of accountability	M-CEBs (n = 5)	L-CEBs (n = 7)
<u>Conselho</u> contains elected members	4	1
<u>Conselho</u> meets directly with membership	3	1

addition, the middle-class conselhos were more likely than their lower-class counterparts to meet directly with ordinary participants to discuss group business.

As in the case of group orientation, class then is not a good predictor of internal democracy or the lack of same. More plausible determinants of CEB democracy may however be related to such things as group age and size. More mature groups, or to some extent larger ones, we might suggest, could indeed be those most likely to have developed a democratic leadership structure.

In Tables 6.7 and 6.8, we examine the effect of CEB age and size on several inter-related aspects of group democracy. Not only do we wish to see what kinds of CEBs possess conselhos, but also which groups have such things as functional sub-groups, lay ministers, or use Church-prepared liturgical and discussion aids. While the maintenance of conselhos is perhaps the most salient indicator of democratic leadership, the presence of these additional factors may point to extant levels of member participation in other aspects of group life. Quite conceivably for example, sub-groups and lay ministers within a CEB may be both indicative of, and contribute to, a participatory membership. The use of liturgical or discussion aids moreover, might signify an attempt on the part of leaders to stimulate members' verbal contributions during reflection or consciousness-raising.

Looking first at Table 6.7, we see that in the case of the middle-class groups, CEB age bears a negligible relationship to the dependent variables. Older CEBs are far from the only ones to possess conselhos, sub-groups, lay ministers, or to rely upon liturgical or discussion aids. Group size however, does appear to be more closely associated with the presence of the characteristics in question, with larger groups more likely than smaller ones to have participation-enhancing features.

TABLE 6.7

EFFECT OF GROUP AGE AND SIZE ON INTERNAL DEMOCRACY OF M-CEBs

(in numbers of groups)

Indicators of internal democracy	Group Age		Group Size	
	Over 5 (n = 8)	Under 5 (n = 3)	Over 15 (n = 6)	Under 15 (n = 5)
<u>Conselho</u>	3	2	4	1
Functional sub-groups	3	1	3	1
Lay ministers	2	1	1	2
Liturgical or discussion aids	3	2	3	2

TABLE 6.8

EFFECT OF GROUP AGE AND SIZE ON INTERNAL DEMOCRACY OF L-CEBs
(in numbers of groups)

Indicators of internal democracy	Group Age		Group Size	
	Over 5 (n = 4)	Under 5 (n = 7)	Over 15 (n = 8)	Under 15 (n = 3)
<u>Conselho</u>	3	4	7	0
Functional sub-groups	3	4	7	0
Lay ministers	2	2	4	0
Liturgical or discussion aids	3	5	7	1

Where the L-CEBs are concerned (Table 6.8) age and size both appear to play a slightly more important role in determining the presence of the dependent variables. As is evident from the table, higher proportions of both older and larger lower-class groups maintain conselhos, sub-groups, and so forth.

There is however, still another factor which explains variation in internal democratic structure in both L-CEBs and M-CEBs with much greater accuracy. Specifically, this factor is related to the nature of the activities which the group undertakes. The relationship between the dependent variables under examination and CEB function becomes clear if we

briefly scan Tables 6.9 and 6.10. Here, we attempt to break down our six CEB sub-categories defined earlier in terms of their possession of conselhos, lay ministers, functional teams, and discussion aids. What is obvious in the case of both L-CEBs and M-CEBs is that the more complex groups, especially in terms of their religious functions, are considerably more likely than others to possess features indicative of a sound internal democratic structure.

The question of what ultimately determines the nature of the activities which a CEB undertakes, we dealt with briefly when discussing Hypothesis One, but have not yet definitively answered. A solution to this problem will however be offered as we now move to a discussion of our third and final research hypothesis.

Hypothesis Three: As a class-based and oriented phenomenon, the CEBs maintain a new and unique relationship with the Church, and rely little upon institutional support (especially that provided by pastoral agents).

TABLE 6.9

EFFECT OF GROUP FUNCTION ON INTERNAL DEMOCRACY OF M-CEBs
(in numbers of groups)

Indicators of internal democracy	No pol.		Some pol.		Comm. Action	
	Basic rel. (n = 2)	Complex rel. (n = 0)	Basic rel. (n = 3)	Complex rel. (n = 4)	Basic rel. (n = 1)	Complex rel. (n = 1)
<u>Conselho</u>	1	-	0	3	0	1
Functional sub-groups	0	-	0	3	1	1
Lay ministers	0	-	0	3	0	0
Liturgical or discussion aids	0	-	1	3	0	1

TABLE 6.10

EFFECT OF GROUP FUNCTION ON INTERNAL DEMOCRACY IN L-CEBs
(in numbers of groups)

Indicators of internal democracy	No pol.		Some pol.		Comm. Action	
	Basic rel. (n = 3)	Complex rel. (n = 1)	Basic rel. (n = 1)	Complex rel. (n = 0)	Basic rel. (n = 0)	Complex rel. (n = 6)
<u>Conselho</u>	0	1	0	-	-	6
Functional sub-groups	0	1	0	-	-	6
Lay ministers	0	0	0	-	-	4
Liturgical or discussion aids	1	1	1	-	-	5

Based upon the qualitative data presented in Chapters IV and V, there would appear to be little basis for this hypothetical claim. Considered alone, the lower-class groups first of all, are rather closely tied to the institutional Church. Secondly, their links with the Church are at least as strong (if not stronger), than those maintained by their more affluent counterparts, further indicating that there is no direct or necessary relationship between the lower-classes and group autonomy. These findings can be demonstrated in a number of ways, beginning with the presence of Church produced liturgical aids and ordained lay ministers within groups.

Referring to the L-CEBs firstly (see Table 6.10), a heavy reliance on formal liturgical and discussion aids may be observed, with 8 of 11 groups using them. Lay ministers admittedly, as unofficial representatives of the hierarchy, are active in only 4 CEBs. Nevertheless, it must be noted that this is one more than can be found in the middle-class groups (Table 6.9) which additionally, are much less reliant than the L-CEBs on Church produced discussion materials.

The CEBs' relationship with other Church groups and agencies are summarized in Table 6.11. As we see from the chart, a fairly high proportion (roughly two-thirds) of the L-CEBs either attend CEB conferences sponsored by the hierarchy, or at very least, participate in parish level

activities. Among the middle-class groups moreover, an almost identical trend is apparent, providing additional evidence that social location and group autonomy are not related in the manner hypothesized.

TABLE 6.11

INSTITUTIONAL LINKAGES OF LOWER AND MIDDLE-CLASS CEBs

(in numbers of groups)

Type of Linkage	M-CEBs (n = 11)	L-CEBs (n = 11)
Attend hierarchically-sponsored CEB conferences	6	7
Participate in parish level activities	8	8

Some interesting differences between L-CEBs and M-CEBs do emerge if we examine CEB conference and parish level participation within sub-categories of groups as determined earlier. As we shall see however, these dissimilarities tend to further weaken rather than support the assumptions of our third hypothesis.

Beginning with the lower-class groups (Table 6.12), we observe that it is only the most evolved CEBs which consistently participate in the two activities in question. Of all possible sub-types, the very CEBs which should, in

theory at least, be most self-reliant, are thus the ones most involved in the day to day affairs of the Church.

TABLE 6.12

EFFECT OF GROUP FUNCTION ON INSTITUTIONAL LINKAGES OF L-CEBs
(in numbers of groups)

Type of linkage	No pol.		Some pol.		Comm. Action	
	Basic rel. (n = 3)	Complex rel. (n = 1)	Basic rel. (n = 1)	Complex rel. (n = 0)	Basic rel. (n = 0)	Complex rel. (n = 6)
Attend hierarchically-sponsored CEB conferences	1	0	0	-	-	6
Participate in parish level activities	2	0	0	-	-	6

TABLE 6.13

EFFECT OF GROUP FUNCTION ON INSTITUTIONAL LINKAGES OF M-CEBs
(in numbers of groups)

Type of linkage	No pol.		Some pol.		Comm. Action	
	Basic rel. (n = 2)	Complex rel. (n = 0)	Basic rel. (n = 3)	Complex rel. (n = 4)	Basic rel. (n = 1)	Complex rel. (n = 1)
Attend hierarchically-sponsored CEB conferences	1	-	1	3	0	1
Participate in parish level activities	1	-	2	4	1	0

In the case of the M-CEBs by contrast (Table 6.13), group sub-type is not a very good predictor of intra-institutional participation. All types of middle-class groups engage in the two activities involved with near equal frequency, as in fact one might expect.

It might be noted in passing as well that M-CEB participation in CEB conferences in particular has a special significance, in that it tends to refute earlier examined assertions expressed by the hierarchy as to the unauthenticity of most middle-class groups. In attending Regional and Archdiocesan CEB encounters, the M-CEBs in our sample quite clearly identify at least as strongly as the L-CEBs (perhaps even moreso) with the CEB phenomenon in general in São Paulo.

Of all the factors linking the CEBs to the Church finally, it is undoubtedly the role of Church agents which is the most obviously important. In Table 6.14, we have broken down our two basic CEB-types in terms of the kind of institutional accompaniment found within each. Using the qualitative data presented in Chapters IV and V, we discovered three basic varieties of middle and lower-class CEBs: 1) those in which priests and nuns are directly present and active in group leadership; 2) those in which priests and nuns are only infrequently or indirectly present (eg. through external supervision of lay leaders); and 3) those in which

religious personnel are not involved in the group or its activities.

TABLE 6.14

PRESENCE OF CHURCH AGENTS IN MIDDLE AND LOWER-CLASS CEBs
(in numbers of groups)

Type of presence	M-CEBs (n = 11)	L-CEBs (n = 11)
Directly and actively present	2	5
Indirectly and infrequently present	2	2
Not involved	7	4

As can be readily observed from the table, 5 of the 11 lower-class groups, first of all, are directly supervised by pastoral agents, with another 2 indirectly or infrequently accompanied. This indicates a fairly high level of institutional regulation within this CEB-type. The M-CEBs by contrast, are for the most part left to their own devices, as only a handful are subject to regular or even infrequent ecclesial supervision.

Aside from pointing to the L-CEBs' strong institutional linkages (contrary to Hypothesis Three), Church accompaniment, or more precisely, the quality of such accompaniment, has serious implications for the ideological orientation of all our sample groups. As compared to the

various factors discussed earlier, eg. group age, size, members' age and so forth, we should like to suggest that the quality of ecclesial supervision (in terms of both the physical presence and world view of pastoral agents), is in fact the key predictor of the kinds of religious and political functions which a CEB undertakes.

TABLE 6.15

EFFECT OF PASTORAL AGENTS' PRESENCE ON ORIENTATION OF L-CEBS
(in numbers of groups)

CEB sub-type	Quality of presence				
	Present and pol. (n = 4)	Indirectly pres. and pol. (n = 2)	Present and rel. (n = 1)	Not involved (n = 4)	
No political	Basic religious	0	1	1	1
	Complex religious	0	1	0	0
Some political	Basic religious	0	0	0	1
	Complex religious	-	-	-	-
Community action	Basic religious	-	-	-	-
	Complex religious	4	0	0	2

In Tables 6.15 and 6.16, we have listed our six sub-categories of lower and middle-class CEBs according to the kinds of institutional presence extant within each. The independent variable in this case, is slightly different than in Table 6.14. In addition to merely indicating whether or not priests or nuns are present, we have included a measure of their overall religious/political orientation, as found in Chapters IV and V.

TABLE 6.16

EFFECT OF PASTORAL AGENTS' PRESENCE ON ORIENTATION OF M-CEBs
(in numbers of groups)

CEB sub-type	Quality of presence			
	Present and pol. (n = 2)	Indirectly pres. and rel. (n = 2)	Not involved (n = 7)	
No political	Basic religious	0	0	2
	Complex religious	-	-	-
Some political	Basic religious	0	0	3
	Complex religious	0	2	2
Community action	Basic religious	1	0	0
	Complex religious	1	0	0

To begin with, in the case of the lower-class groups (Table 6.15), the relationship between the two variables is straightforward and in the expected direction. We see first of all, that those 4 groups in which religious personnel are politically progressive and actively present in the CEB leadership, all fall within the most developed group sub-category. By contrast, those CEBs in which priests or nuns are politically oriented, but not directly present, or present but not politically oriented, barely evolved beyond the lowest sub-types. Groups finally, which are not accompanied by pastoral agents, pursue a number of ends from the least to the most religiously and politically complex. Insofar as a link between the presence of progressive religious personnel and CEB evolution has been shown, it is admittedly somewhat perplexing as to why two of the non-accompanied lower-class groups should still fall within the most developed sub-type. We might suggest however, that in the case of one (the Comunidade Santa Maria, Santo Amaro Region), members of the Partido dos Trabalhadores (Workers' Party) may have replaced pastoral agents as promoters of community action. It might also be added that within this same group, and the other CEB in question (the Comunidade São Pedro, Santo Amaro Region), the intensity with which consciousness-raising and the revindicações have been undertaken has been less than strong. Both groups moreover,

are affected by ideological division among the membership, where the vast majority of directly accompanied and politically oriented L-CEBs are not.

An almost identical pattern to that of the L-CEBs may be detected for the middle-class groups. As we see from Table 6.16, the 2 CEBs which are closely supervised by politically oriented religious personnel are the only groups involved in community action. Groups accompanied by religiously oriented pastoral agents, in comparison, have developed complex religious activities, but politically have not moved beyond elementary consciousness-raising. Nor for that matter have those M-CEBs which are not accompanied by religious personnel.

The extent to which the CEBs in our sample pursue religious or political activities is largely dependent thus, on the quality of ecclesial supervision which is present. Other factors, it is true, may still determine what specific functions may or may not be practically undertaken. Depending upon the group's social location for example, it may be induced to instigate a neighbourhood improvement project (revindicação) as opposed to adopting the cause of some oppressed group, such as the Guarani Indians. Similarly, small groups may not be able to prepare celebrações, while never CEBs may be unable to form informal consciousness-raising circles due to lack of organization and so forth. What we wish to do emphasize however, is that such

factors do not in themselves determine what activities a CEB will undertake. Rather, irrespective of the obstacles, or indeed opportunities presented by extant living conditions or group characteristics, the essential thrust of the CEBs will be highly affected by the physical presence and political orientation of Church agents.

Insofar incidently, as it affects group orientation, the presence of religious personnel in the CEBs is also thus necessarily linked to internal group democracy. As we saw when discussing Hypothesis Two, the most religiously and or politically developed CEBs, which as we know are the groups most likely to be institutionally accompanied, were far more inclined than others to possess conselhos, functional sub-groups, lay ministers, and to use Church-produced liturgical and discussion aids.

As to how it is finally, that Church agents exercise influence over specific groups, two distinct possibilities might be offered. In a few groups, as we saw in Chapters IV and V, the accompanying priest or nun was simply the dominant directing force, selecting or avoiding specific activities in the name of all group members. Much more frequently however, it would appear that religious personnel tend to work through local lay leaders who are in tune (or who come in to be in tune) with the pastoral agents' particular worldview. Priests or nuns thus work together with lay directors to

bring ordinary CEB participants into ideological conformity. In addition to the qualitative descriptions of the pastoral agents' role which appeared in Chapters IV and V, evidence for the 'Church personnel-lay leader' mode of influence was also provided in Chapter III. Here we saw that both middle and lower-class CEB leaders (i.e. conselho members and clerically appointed coordinators), tended to differ from ordinary group participants in terms of their politically-related beliefs and behaviour. Directors within the L-CEBs, which we have observed are likely to be accompanied by politically progressive priests and nuns, were somewhat more inclined to adopt a liberal stance than was the membership. By contrast, leaders of the M-CEBs, the bulk of which were non-accompanied or supervised indirectly by religiously oriented Church agents, were on the whole slightly more conservative than regular participants.

On the basis of the qualitative findings summarized and discussed in this Chapter, there are, in conclusion, little or no grounds for accepting any of our three research hypotheses. To begin with, few if any of the lower-class CEBs possess all of the qualities which are hypothetically ascribed to them. Moreover, the L-CEBs are not, in most fundamental respects, all that different from their more affluent counterparts. The hypotheses, which posit that the CEBs possess certain specific characteristics, and that these

characteristics are class-based, have thus been refuted in all possible respects.

What in fact does give the CEBs their particular stamp, we strongly suggested, is the nature and quality of their ties to the institutional Church, and especially to pastoral agents. The pastoral agent is not simply a guide, accompanying the CEB to its inevitable political maturity, he or she is an active orientator, whose perspective is critical to group organization and thrust. Of the two approaches to the CEBs described in Chapter I then, it is the institutional approach which provides us with the greatest insight into the CEBs essential character. Rather than a class-based phenomenon, as suggested by the grassroots view, what the groups are and do is greatly influenced by their special relationship with the institutional Church.

Despite its overall interpretive superiority, the institutional view does have certain limitations. Unlike the grassroots theorists who see the CEBs as ultimately transforming Brazilian society, advocates of the institutional approach provide us with few clues as to the future role of the groups within both religious and secular environments. This is a problem however, to which we shall turn in our concluding Chapter.

CONCLUSION

In Chapter I, we carefully outlined the major assumptions of two distinct approaches to the CEB phenomenon in Brazil. The first or 'grassroots' view, we stated, interpreted the groups as a semi-autonomous current existing within the Church, originating in the emergent class consciousness of the poor and oriented towards their total liberation. The second or 'institutional' approach, we offered, portrayed the CEBs in much less ideological terms, stressing both the structural and orientational diversity of the groups, and the strength of their ties to the Church hierarchy. The CEBs in fact were seen as a product of a carefully planned ecclesial strategy, designed not only to help the poor to help themselves, but to re-establish a Church presence among the masses.

In order to test the validity of these contrasting views, we created a series of three research hypotheses based upon the major assumptions of the grassroots approach which currently dominates the literature. Each of the hypotheses dealt with some specific aspect of CEB organization or function presumed to be present as a consequence of the groups' social location. Hypothesis One posited that as communities of the poor, the CEBs were collectively oriented

towards liberation; Hypothesis Two, that they were inherently democratic; and Hypothesis Three, that they developed with a minimum of Church interference.

In the Chapters which followed, we used quantitative and qualitative data amassed on a diverse sample of CEBs to test these hypotheses in two different ways. First, we checked to see how closely the lower-class groups in the sample (or what the grassroots view assumed to be the only authentic groups) conformed to the image of the CEBs suggested by each hypothetical claim. Next, we sought to compare the overall characteristics of these CEBs with those of groups from middle-class areas. The assumption here was that clear-cut differences or similarities between group types would conclusively confirm or repudiate the class basis of any special status possessed by the lower-class CEBs in any or all of the hypothesized respects.

As we saw time and time again, the data did not in the end confirm the major assumptions of grassroots theory as embodied in the hypotheses. In some respects, it is true, a number of the lower-class or ostensibly 'real' groups did conform to the characterization suggested by one or more of the hypothetical claims. Many however did not, and thus we concluded that the CEBs of the poor were not on the whole uniformly oriented towards liberation, nor necessarily democratic, nor able to survive with a minimum of institutional guidance. Still further doubt was cast on the

validity of grassroots assumptions owing to the presence among the middle-class groups of a good many characteristics supposedly indigenous to the less affluent CEBs. Obviously, if CEBs originating in different social classes possess similar traits and aims, then surely social class is no predictor of what a CEB is or what it seeks to accomplish.

What in fact did emerge as the major determinant of group orientation and structure, as the institutional view suggested, was the quality of the CEBs' ties to the Church. With respect to CEB function first of all, we noted that those groups most heavily involved in political action were extremely likely to be accompanied by priests or nuns in sympathy with the current aims of the Church. By contrast, unaccompanied CEBs, or those supervised by more traditionally oriented religious personnel, were not so engaged. CEB organization was similarly affected by the presence of pastoral agents, although perhaps less directly. This was true insofar as internal structure was heavily influenced by group activities, the nature of which, as noted above, largely depended on the extant quality of institutional accompaniment within a CEB.

Naturally, there are methodological problems which could conceivably have biased our findings with respect to the superiority of the institutional view, and hence their applicability to CEB phenomenon in general. The sample, it

could be argued for instance, is rather small and quite localized. To the first charge we would answer that although perhaps limited, the sample was however scientifically selected and contained within it groups from the broadcast possible range of geographical and social locations. In response to the criticism that the research is too narrow, we would offer three comments. To begin with, we believe that the selection of CEBs from one single archdiocese was sound, insofar as it allowed for a more detailed analysis of the effect of a large number of Church and non-church related factors on CEB development than might have been possible had a larger or more diverse research frame been adopted. Secondly, of all the ecclesiastical units in Brazil which could have been chosen, São Paulo offers the broadest range of CEB types owing to its extremely large population and land area. Thirdly, it might be mentioned that São Paulo is considered to be one of the most politically progressive archdioceses in Latin America. In all likelihood therefore, our results would have favoured the acceptance of our hypotheses even less had the sample been radically expanded or chosen within some other social or geographical context. One final criticism which might be offered is that the researcher's reliance on pastoral agents to effect entry into most sample CEBs (which was absolutely necessary in all cases), may have led to an exaggeration of their importance to the groups. While this may appear as a distinct

possibility, aside from the researcher's own observations, corroborating evidence of the pastoral agents' dominant role within specific CEBs was provided by ordinary group members, either through written questionnaires or informal interviews.

Having thus countered a number of possible criticisms of our overall approach, we may proceed with some confidence to a broader discussion of the ramifications of our research findings. Basically, the acceptance of the institutional approach to the CEBs is of considerable importance at two distinct theoretical levels. Within the CEB literature, first of all, it represents a serious blow to Liberation Theology, which lies at the heart of grassroots theory and sees itself as the quasi-official interpreter of the CEB phenomenon. One must surely question the quality of the research methods which its exponents employ, if not indeed their motives for presenting such an idyllic view of the CEBs' structure and function. It would appear that they wish to promote the groups in accordance with their own particular worldview, as opposed to objectively studying the nature and consequences of an important current within the Church.

Insofar moreover, as the two competing approaches which have been examined are rooted more generally in sociological theory, our conclusions also have a certain significance at the most profound level of social analysis.

Liberationist or grassroots theory, it will be recalled, is generally grounded in basic Marxian concepts of class consciousness and struggle, seen as operant in a distinctly religious context. In essence, the CEBS are formed within the Church as the oppressed class becomes a class for itself, and engages in a struggle to 'overthrow' the dominant classes within both religious and secular spheres. Following Gramsci moreover, a special role is attributed to pastoral agents, the organic intellectuals who convert to the cause of the poor and help them to realize their revolutionary potential. By contrast, institutional theorists draw upon a more conventional theoretical base. In accordance with classical organization theory, they tend first of all to see the Church as an institution which, like any other, seeks to implement its own internally determined goals within a broader societal context. The CEBS, it is claimed, have been developed by the Church as part of a strategy to enhance its institutional strength, and to make itself more relevant within the existing reality of Brazil. Drawing on Weber especially, institutional theorists also place a good deal more emphasis than their grassroots counterparts on certain key individuals such as bishops and especially pastoral agents. These are seen as politically aware and powerful intermediaries who are largely responsible for implementing the goals of the institutional Church among the masses.

Based on our research findings, the case of the Brazilian CEBs quite clearly lends little support to the marxist interpretation of social action from whence the grassroots view hails. Within the CEBs, social action, at least where we have seen it to occur, begins with fundamentally religious and not secular, class-rooted beliefs. These beliefs are defined and propagated moreover, by a religious institution in response to its own perceived needs. If class is at all involved in stimulating social action within the CEBs, it is only as a backdrop, providing the justification for the Church's this-worldly intervention on behalf of the poor, and the setting within which religious personnel undertake their work. Here in fact, we observe no clearer affirmation of the assumptions of Weber in particular, who saw the causal link between class situations and the development of new religious ideas, and the subsequent implementation of these ideas by progressive-minded and action-oriented 'civic strata'.

The importance of a 'top-down' as opposed to 'bottom up' view of change, especially within religious institutions, can also be shown in contexts outside of the CEBs and even Brazil. Within the Canadian Catholic Church for example, recent calls for nuclear disarmament, full employment, statements in support of striking workers, and so forth, emanate for the most part not from those who are most affected, but from the highest echelons of Church government

(see for example, 'Catholic bishops', 1985). Moreover, those Catholic and even Protestant churches both in the United States and Canada which have offered sanctuary to Central American refugees, with but few exceptions, have not done so without the blessing of local Church officials. Quite often in fact, judging from news reports, it is the pastor of the congregation involved who has instigated the action in question, and who takes sole responsibility for its consequences.

But while the institutional view, composed as it is of the broad theoretical currents described, may adequately explain Church innovation in various contexts, in the case of the Brazilian CEBs, its predictive power is quite limited. Where the grassroots view sees the CEBs as the leading edge of a new society, institutionalists offer few clues as to what, if any, future role the groups will play in Brazil.

Based on the foregoing analysis of the CEB phenomenon, we should like then in closing, to present a few of our own ideas on this subject. To begin with, we would suggest that as a phenomenon, the CEBs will likely continue to thrive in Brazil, in some form or other, for a long time to come. Catholic lay groups after all, have existed in Brazil and elsewhere for a good many years, and their popularity does not appear to be on the wane. Mere survival however, is one thing; if the CEBs are to develop and

multiply in accordance with the high sociopolitical ideals which the Church has established, it is our belief that a number of conditions will have to be met and problems resolved.

First of all, the Church will have to place a good deal more emphasis on the selection and training of pastoral agents. As our study has shown, CEBs accompanied by priests or nuns in tune with present Church teaching, invariably adopt political causes which express a 'preferential option for the poor and oppressed'. The need for more politically aware Church agents is especially acute among middle-class CEBs, which are currently fewer in number and less oriented towards social change than their lower-class counterparts. Certainly the political rhetoric traditionally used by pastoral agents to stimulate CEB activation would have to be toned down so as not to offend middle-class sensibilities. It is after all, difficult to convert those who you accuse of the malicious oppression of the masses. Nevertheless, the possibility of large numbers of middle-class CEBs, given the proper stimulus, we believe, is a real one. The conversion of more affluent Brazilians to the cause of the poor, we should like to add, is not only desirable but necessary both to the continued loyalty of the middle-classes, and to the ultimate success of the Church's strategy for social change. As Moore (1966) has pointed out, societal transformation of a depth desired by the Church has rarely occurred in modern

history as a consequence of actions undertaken by the poor in isolation, no matter how oppressed or ready for revolution they may be.

Another potentially harmful problem affecting CEB development originates in the Vatican. As has been widely reported, Brazil's leading Liberation Theologist, Leonardo Boff, was recently censured by Rome's Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith for "errors and deviations" committed in a book entitled Igreja: Carisma e Poder (Church: Charism and Power). Accused of having drawn too closely on secular marxism in his writings on Church and society, Boff has been prohibited from writing or speaking publically for a period of eighteen months. His brother Clodovis moreover, another important Liberationist, has also run into difficulty both at home and abroad. In Rome, he has been forbidden to teach in a school run by his own order (Servitas) and in Brazil has been barred by Cardinal Eugenio Sales of Rio de Janeiro from instructing in all colégios within his jurisdiction ('Duplo castigo', 1985). As Liberation Theology is so closely connected with the CEB phenomenon in Brazil, attacks from conservative sources on its major exponents have serious implications for group formation and development. For one thing, much of the politically explicit material which is distributed for use in the CEBs may now be considered too radical, and will have to be withdrawn or

modified to conform more closely with Biblical teaching. Most importantly perhaps, members of the hierarchy and pastoral agents themselves will have to re-think their entire approach to the poor as an exploited class. They may have to adopt an approach which stresses the unity of the faithful rather than the virtue of class struggle. Thus, the political burner which fuels CEB activation may have to be turned down, reducing the chances that a truly revolutionary CEB vanguard will ever emerge.

A third and final factor which may impede the development of the CEB phenomenon along the lines desired by the Church is related to the currently existing political and social situation in Brazil. Since 1978, the nation has been moving slowly but steadily towards democracy and a number of political parties and popular organizations have emerged which represent a variety of interests. In 1982, a record number of Brazilians elected state governors and state and federal representatives from a host of political parties, and in 1985, the first civilian president in over 20 years was sworn into office. To the extent that the political process continues to evolve in this direction, and that social reforms are undertaken in earnest, the potential usefulness of small cells with strong Church links may be severely diminished. There is of course no telling what in time could befall this incipient turn to democracy in Brazil, and thus it may be premature to assert that the CEBs will never come

to play the prophetic role which the Church has ascribed to them.

But irrespective of the CEB's chances for singlehandedly transforming the political and economic status quo, given the problems cited above, the truth is that the groups are already making some significant, albeit subtle contributions to Brazilian society whose effect may only be perceived in the long run. It has been noted in numerous works (see for example, Azevedo, 1958; Erickson, 1977; Faoro, 1976; Freyre, 1966; Kadt, 1970; and Roett, 1972) that stemming from its Iberian roots, the relationship between rich and poor in Brazil has long been based on the 'patron-client' model. In rural areas for example, peasants have traditionally been tied to landowners by a reciprocal net of rights and duties, offering their services and loyalty to the local latifundário in return for protection and the provision of basic necessities. Even in modern industrial Brazil, the patron-client system has operated openly within both economic and political spheres. Within the former context for example, paternalistic labour laws enacted in the 1930's, granting workers tenure after 10 years service, and tying all trade unions to the Ministry of Labour, remain in force virtually unchanged. At the political level, elected officials have historically owed their position more to their own personal prestige and the dispensation of favours than to

party platforms. As 'patrons', they are expected by the people moreover, to undertake most every conceivable kind of task, from ensuring that streets are regularly cleaned to declaring war (as Erickson, 1977, points out, Brazil is one of the most regulated societies in the world). Grassroots initiative by contrast, of a kind taken for granted in the United States and Canada, is relatively rare.

The CEBs, or at least the most politically active of these among the poor, appear to be playing a major role in dismantling the patron-client system as it has traditionally operated in Brazil. In effect, they are creating within the lower-classes a desire for change; a desire to participate more fully in the way their neighbourhoods, towns, and indeed their country is run. This desire is not however, it should be stressed, rooted in some class awakening, nor are its goals essentially socialistic (in the sense understood by certain intellectuals). Rather, in carrying out the revindicações, in improving the quality of their districts, and indeed their homes, CEB participants appear to be developing a sense of what Tocqueville (1945b: 130) would call "self-interest rightly understood." In other words, they are coming to realize that in working with others to help themselves, instead of relying on beneficent patrões, they are contributing to the good of all. It is this attitude of helping oneself with an eye to the common good, Tocqueville strongly suggests, which contributes to the

making of a responsibly citizenry, and helps safeguard and promote democratic institutions of checking individualism. It is then, in creating a sense of citizenship among the poor, and thus destroying the traditional patron-client mentality that the CEBs perhaps hold the greatest promise for the future of Brazilian society. Rather interestingly moreover, the embourgeoisment of CEB members may also contribute to a growing tension between the groups and the progressive hierarchy.

APPENDIX

This study was based on field research conducted in the Archdiocese of São Paulo, Brazil, from January to June, 1984. Data were collected from written materials, members of the local hierarchy and from a number of CEBs chosen from various areas throughout the Archdiocese. In the pages which follow, we shall attempt to outline in some detail our research methodology, and to briefly discuss any problems encountered during the course of the field work. We shall begin with an explanation of how our research area and CEB sample were chosen, to be followed by an examination of the data collection techniques employed. Translations of actual interview schedules and questionnaires used will be presented in separate sections at the end of the appendix.

The Research Area

The selection of a research frame within which to conduct our study was not an easy task, as the Brazilian CEBs tend to be a national as opposed to regional phenomenon. We could in fact, have chosen any number of areas, but ultimately decided on São Paulo because it possesses certain specific characteristics which make it especially attractive. Firstly, the Archdiocese is the largest in Brazil in terms of

land area and population. Secondly, it is quite diverse with respect to land-use patterns and social characteristics. There are for example, any number of well-defined districts, ranging from urban high-density to suburban low-density, which are inhabited by persons of widely varying class backgrounds. Thirdly, São Paulo is considered to be one of the most politically progressive archdiocese in Brazil, suggesting that large numbers of CEBs would likely be available for study. All things considered therefore, São Paulo was envisioned as an abundantly ample research frame where adequate numbers of CEBs from a variety of social and geographical locations would be present, and where Church and non-Church related factors potentially associated with the CEB phenomenon could be known and accounted for.

The CEB Sample

Having selected and become familiar with the research area, we set about to choose a sample of CEBs for intense study. Basically, it was our intention to examine a number of groups from as many different parts of the Archdiocese as possible, with an eye however, in accordance with our research aims, to maintaining a rough balance between CEBs originating in lower-class areas, and those in more affluent districts. To this end, we devised a stratified random sampling plan which was executed in the following stages.

Our first task was to narrow the research frame down somewhat so as to make the study more manageable. This job was made relatively easy due to the fact that the Archdiocese is already divided into 9 separate Episcopal Regions (or quasi-dioceses) of roughly equal population, each with their own resident bishop and local system of government. Using a recent government study (GESP, 1977) which divides the Municipality of São Paulo into homogeneous areas based on the physical properties of districts and the class origins of their inhabitants, we began by developing a rough socioeconomic profile of each Region. We then selected out 3 of the 9 Regions which we felt best captured the essential characteristics of the Archdiocese as a whole. The first of these, Região Sē, was chosen because it lies at the heart of the Archdiocese, and is strictly urban and predominantly middle-class (although pockets of urban slum-dwellers are also present). The two other Regions, Santo Amaro and São Miguel, lie to the south and east of Se respectively, and were selected because they are partly urban and affluent, but also take in huge expanses of São Paulo's suburban periphery, where the poor predominate.

The next stage in the sampling process involved the selection of sub-Regional units or sectors from the 3 Regions chosen as per above. Ideally, we wished to pick one more affluent and one less affluent sector from among the 5 or 6 extant, on average, within each Region. To do this, we had

first to rank each of the 20 or so sub-Regional units involved using the homogeneous-area ranking scheme described earlier. Sectors were given scores ranging from 1 (urban high-density, upper-class) to 8 (suburban periphery, lower-class). One less affluent sector was then chosen at random from among those with the lowest scores in each Region, and one more affluent sector from among those with the highest scores. For example, S \bar{e} Region possesses 6 sectors in total; 2 of rank 1, 2 of rank 2, and 2 of rank 4. Using the statistical mean of these scores (2.3) as a break-point, we chose 1 sector from among those with ranks above 2.3, and one from those with ranks lower than 2.3.

Once we had thus chosen 2 'opposing' sectors from each of our 3 Regions, we subsequently moved to select our sample parishes. So as to provide a fair number of these for study, we decided to pick 2 at random from every sector (which, on average contain anywhere from 5 to 8 in total). To ensure moreover, that these parishes generally conformed to our characterization of the sub-Regional unit in which they were situated, local pastors were immediately contacted by telephone and quizzed briefly about extant social conditions within their areas of jurisdiction. Once the physical and socioeconomic status of the parishes was confirmed (which it invariably was), we then solicited meetings with the pastors in order to personally request

permission to conduct research in their areas. To facilitate introductions, the researcher carried a number of letters of reference from the Government of Canada, the Universidade de São Paulo, the Archdiocese of São Paulo, and so forth. These however, were rarely required. In only one case in fact, did the local pastor refuse to allow us to undertake field work in his parish. In response, the researcher simply chose another parish at random from within the same sector.

Our final task was to select individual CEBs for study. Ideally, it was our intention to choose 2 groups at random from within each of the 12 sample parishes. This, we believed, would provide a fairly large, yet manageable sample, and also allow us to make comparisons between sister CEBs existing under near identical conditions. The selection of pairs of CEBs within parishes was contingent however, upon their availability for study, and in a few cases unfortunately, no more than 1 CEB was operational. The sample consequently, was in the end somewhat smaller than we had initially envisioned.

The CEBs which were ultimately chosen for investigation were picked from lists of lay groups provided by the parish pastor. To be considered potential candidates for random selection, parish CEBs had to conform to the basic definition of the groups which the Church has adopted (see CNBB, 1982: 13). In specific, they had to be: i) communities, in the sense that they shared living conditions

in common; ii) ecclesial, insofar as they were composed of people who considered themselves to be a part of the Roman Catholic Church; and iii) basic, in that they consisted of ordinary lay people. Naturally, we were forced to rely heavily on the local priest to help us ascertain whether or not the groups under consideration actually possessed these qualities. Once the selection process was completed however, the presence of these basic attributes within the CEBs finally chosen was confirmed by the researcher before proceeding.

Aside from offering help in the group selection process, pastors were invaluable in assisting the researcher to establish contact with individual CEBs. Their aid in fact was crucial to the successful completion of the study for two reasons. On the one hand, it was invariably the case that only the local priest actually knew where the CEBs in his parish were located, when they met, who was in charge and so forth. On the other hand, the researcher's introduction to a particular CEB by the pastor himself nearly always led to a smoother and speedier entry. As we learned from experience, CEB participants were more likely to welcome and accept outsiders previously cleared by the ranking Church official in the area.

Using the procedural strategy outlined above, we were able to obtain a sample consisting of some 21 CEBs. Eleven

of these were located in urban middle-class districts with a weighted average homogeneous-area rank of 3.9. The remainder were situated in lower-class areas (average rank 7.2) either on the periphery of São Paulo (n = 8), or in urban slums (n = 2). One additional lower-class CEB, it should be mentioned, was later added during the course of actual research, bringing the total number of CEBs sampled to 22 and balancing the ratio of affluent to non-affluent groups. This group was added to facilitate an examination of the unique relationship it maintained with another, previously selected CEB. The precise location and basic statistics of each of our 22 sample CEBs we have summarized in Table A.1.

Data Collection and Analysis

In the field, data were collected with a minimum of difficulty from a variety of sources using a number of methods. To begin with, during the initial stage of the research, we conducted in-depth interviews with the local Archbishop, Dom Paulo Arns, and the auxiliary bishops resident in each of the 9 Episcopal Regions of São Paulo. Gaining access to these individuals was fairly easy, although in some cases the researcher was forced to submit to time-consuming screening procedures. Interviews with members of the upper hierarchy were carried out using a prepared question guide which solicited information on their personal background, as well as their views on the Church and the CEB

TABLE A.1
BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF SAMPLE CEBs

Sample CEBs by location	Rank of sector where CEB located	Group age (years)	Group size (members)
Santo Amaro			
Middle-class: CEB	1-1	5	2
	1-2	5	9
	1-3	5	2
Lower-class: CEB	1-4	8	17
	1-5	8	9
	1-6	8	13
	1-7	8	5
	1-8	8	15
Sã			
Middle-class: CEB	2-1	1	13
	2-2	1	9
	2-3	1	10
	2-4	1	4
Lower-class: CEB	2-5	4	2
	2-6	4	1
São Miguel			
Middle-class: CEB	3-1	6	3
	3-2	6	5
	3-3	6	6
	3-4	6	5
Lower-class: CEB	3-5	8	2
	3-6	8	2
	3-7	8	4
	3-8	8	3

phenomenon in general (see Schedule A). During visits to the central and Regional curiae moreover, available CEB-related documents were also collected and examined by the researcher. All such information obtained at this particular level formed the basis for our discussion of the Archdiocesan hierarchy with appeared in Chapter II, and briefly again in Chapters IV and V.

At the parish level, information on pastors and Church agents working with or responsible for specific sample CEBs, was obtained employing the same question guide as used for the bishops. To parish pastors in particular, a few additional questions were directed regarding the size and population of their parishes, the number of CEBs currently in operation, and their ages. Locally produced CEB materials were also requested where found to be in existence. Although referred to briefly in Chapter II, the bulk of the data gathered at the parish level were used in Chapter IV and V, where we focused, among other things, on the physical setting of individual CEBs and their relationship with local Church representatives.

At the CEB level, data were gathered in three ways. First of all, self-identified lay leaders were questioned with regard to the basic features, history, function, and principal activities of their CEB. Here again, we relied upon a question guide, a translation of which appears in

Schedule B. The information obtained from group leaders formed the basis of our discussion of aggregate CEB attributes appearing near the beginning of Chapter III.

Secondly, background information on both CEB leaders and ordinary participants themselves, as well as their opinions on secular and Church-related matters, were obtained by means of a self-administered written questionnaire (see Schedule C). Following regular group meetings, or sometimes celebrações if necessary, group participants were asked to take a questionnaire, fill it in, and return it to the researcher in one to two weeks time. To ensure the best possible response rate, the researcher offered a nominal monetary donation (Cr\$ 200 to 250 or about Can\$ 0.30) to the CEB for every completed form returned. For the most part, non-response was not a problem and of the 400 questionnaires distributed in total, some 275 or nearly 70 percent were returned. Though some fluctuations in response rates between individual CEBs were apparent (see Table A.2), these did not seem to vary by Region or social class, and thus were unlikely to have affected our overall findings.

The questionnaire data served two basic purposes. To begin with, through crosstabulation of raw frequencies of responses (to which standard significance tests and measures of strength of association were applied) we were able to verify the class status of CEB members located in middle and lower-class areas respectively, and subsequently to compare

their attitudes and behaviour. Such comparative data were presented toward the end of Chapter III. In addition, we were able to provide, throughout Chapters IV, V, and VI, a much more detailed and accurate analysis of the membership characteristics of individual CEBs than has previously appeared in the literature.

The final data gathering technique which was employed at the CEB level was participant observation. During the weeks spent in each group, the researcher was in fact able to collect a good deal of information informally through conversation with ordinary members and attendance at CEB functions. The importance of this type of information, the lion's share of which was presented in Chapters IV and V, cannot be understated. Not only was it useful in crosschecking and supplementing data gathered using more formal methods, it offered perhaps the largest single contribution to our understanding of the CEBs' day to day existence.

TABLE A.2
 QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSE RATES WITHIN INDIVIDUAL CEBs
 (in percentages)

Sample CEBs by location	Response rate (%)
Santo Amaro	
Middle-class: CEB 1-1	100
1-2	45
1-3	26
Lower-class: CEB 1-4	94
1-5	90
1-6	68
1-7	84
1-8	21
Se	
Middle-class: CEB 2-1	60
2-2	75
2-3	88
2-4	90
Lower-class: CEB 2-5	100
2-6	100
Sao Miguel	
Middle-class: CEB 3-1	86
3-2	90
3-3	89
3-4	100
Lower-class: CEB 3-5	90
3-6	48
3-7	37
3-8	77

Schedule A: Question Guide - Hierarchy

1. What is your nationality? 1. Brazilian. 2. Other_____.
2. If born outside Brazil, how long have you lived here?
_____yrs. _____mos.
3. If Brazilian, in what state were you born? _____.
4. Were you born in a rural or urban area? 1. Rural 2. Urban
5. What was your father's occupation? _____.
6. What is your age? _____ yrs.
7. How long have you been a priest/bishop? _____yrs.
8. Do you belong to a religious order? _____.
9. How long have you been in this particular parish/Region?
_____ yrs. _____ mos.
10. Educational history: a) universities attended and level
obtained _____
b) seminaries attended _____
11. Professional/career history: Place _____
Position _____. Duration _____.
12. How would you define a CEB? _____.
13. What do you feel is their role within the Church? _____.
14. What do you feel is their role within society? _____.
15. A great deal of emphasis has been placed on the CEBs
within the Archdiocesan Pastoral Plan. How would you
rate the growth of CEBs in your particular Region/parish?
1. Excellent. 2. Very good. 3. Good. 4.
Satisfactory. 5. Poor. 6. Very poor. Comments _____.

16. What concrete actions have you taken in support of the CEB phenomenon in your Region/parish? _____.
17. What difficulties have you encountered in carrying out the Pastoral Plan as it pertains to CEBs? _____.

Schedule B: Question Guide - CEB Leadership

1. How many people belong to this group? _____.
2. How long has this group been meeting? ____ yrs. ____ mos.
3. Why was this group originally formed? 1. To resolve a specific problem in the community. 2. To satisfy members' religious needs. 3. Other _____.
4. Who initiated this group? 1. Was initiated at the behest of the priest or other Church personnel. 2. Emerged spontaneously among the members themselves. 3. Other ____.
5. What is the overall function or goal of this group?_____.
6. Which of the following activities does this group participate in?
 - a) Preparation of the mass, liturgy: 1. Regularly. 2. Occasionally. 3. Rarely. 4. Never.
 - b) Preparation of other sacraments (specify): 1. Regularly. 2. Occasionally. 3. Rarely. 4. Never.
 - c) Reflection and discussion: 1. Regularly. 2. Occasionally. 3. Rarely. 4. Never.
 - d) Charity and community work: 1. Regularly. 2. Occasionally. 3. Rarely. 4. Never.
 - e) Political or social consciousness-raising: 1. Regularly. 2. Occasionally. 3. Rarely. 4. Never.
 - f) Bible study: 1. Regularly. 2. Occasionally. 3. Rarely. 4. Never.
 - g) Other (eg. revindicações): 1. Regularly. 2. Occasionally. 3. Rarely. 4. Never.

7. How frequently does this group meet? 1. More than once a week. 2. Once a week. 3. A few times a month. 4. Once a month. 5. Other.
8. Where does this group usually meet? 1. In a church. 2. At someone's home. 3. Other _____.
9. What is the usual format of meetings? _____.
10. How is this group led? Who directs this group? 1. Priest. 2. Nun. 3. Priest and nun. 4. Layperson or laypersons. 5. Priest and laypersons. 6. Nun and laypersons. 7. Priest, nun, and laypersons.
11. For the most part, who decides what activities will be undertaken by this group? 1. The leaders only. 2. The leaders in consultation with the members. 3. The leaders and the members altogether. 4. The members only. 5. Other _____.
12. What formal or informal ties does this group have with other groups? _____.
13. Has this group ever sent representatives to Regional or national conferences sponsored by the Church? (specify)
_____.

Schedule C: CEB Member Questionnaire

Preamble

The following questionnaire was formulated to obtain information about the characteristics and attitudes of the members of this and other similar groups. The information obtained will be used in a doctoral dissertation about basic Christian communities of the Catholic Church in Greater São Paulo. Although not specifically intended for publication, parts of this study may appear in books or articles for academic use.

Do not put your name on the questionnaire. The questionnaire must be completed anonymously. Your identity will not be connected in any way with the responses given here.

Please read and respond to each question as best you can, in conformity with the instructions (given orally). In some questions, we seek personal information, or that pertaining to your experience in this group. In others, we seek only your opinion. If there are some questions to which you do not have an answer, or to which you do not wish to respond, feel free to ignore them. Thank you very much for your help.

Part I - Personal Background

1. Your age? _____ yrs.
2. Your sex? 1. Male. 2. Female.
3. Your nationality? 1. Brazilian. 2. Other (specify) _____.
4. If Brazilian, in what state were you born? 1. São Paulo.
2. Other (specify): _____.
5. If Brazilian, were you born in an urban or rural area?
1. Urban. 2. Rural. 3. Don't know/don't remember.
6. Are you married? 1. Yes. 2. No. 3. Separated or
divorced. 4. Don't know/don't remember.
7. Are you presently employed? 1. Yes. 2. No.
8. If you are not presently employed, why not? 1. Student.
2. Retired. 3. Laid-off. 4. Housewife. 5. Illness. 6.
Self-supporting. 7. Other (specify): _____.
9. What is your occupation, or was your occupation if not
presently employed? If a housewife, what is or was your
husband's occupation? _____.
10. More or less, how much does your family earn per month?
1. Less than 1 minimum salary. 2. Between 1 and 2 ms.
3. Between 2 and 5 ms. 4. Between 5 and 10 ms. 5.
Between 10 and 15 ms. 6. More than 15 ms. 7. Don't
know/don't remember.
11. Up to what educational level have you completed? 1. Less
than elementary. 2. Elementary. 3. Some secondary. 4.
Secondary. 5. Technical course incomplete. 6. Technical

course complete. 7. University incomplete. 8. University level or higher.

12. Presently, do you live: 1. In this neighbourhood. 2. In another area of the city (specify): _____.

Part II - Religious and Secular Attitudes and Behaviour

13. Do you attend mass: 1. More than once a week. 2. Once a week. 3. A few times per month. 4. Once a month. 5. A few times a year. 6. Never or almost never. 7. Don't know/don't remember.

14. How often do you pray to each of the following? (possible responses: 1. Regularly. 2. Sometimes. 3. Almost never or never. 4. Don't know/don't remember.)

a) Our Lady

b) God

c) Your devotional saint

d) The souls

e) Jesus Christ

f) Other (specify): _____.

15. Do you visit a spiritist temple? 1. Regularly. 2. Sometimes. 3. Have visited once or twice. 4. Never. 5. Don't know/don't remember.

16. How would you describe Jesus Christ? (Select the one response which you feel is best). 1. An all-powerful saint. 2. The Son of God who was crucified. 3. The

liberator of the poor and oppressed. 4. A great prophet.

5. Other (specify): _____ . 6. Don't know.

17. What does the Catholic Church mean to you? (Select the one response which you feel is best). 1. A place where people pray and receive the sacraments. 2. A community of the people of God. 3. The priests and the bishops. 4. The reunion of baptized souls. 5. Other (specify): _____ . 6. Don't know.

18. To what extent do you trust the following groups to defend the interests of people such as yourself? (possible responses: 1. A good deal. 2. More or less. 3. A little. 4. Not at all. 5. Don't know.)

a) Unions

b) Government

c) The Catholic Church

d) The Armed Forces

e) Politicians

f) Other (specify): _____ .

19. Which of the following problems do you think the Catholic Church can resolve? (possible responses: 1. Yes. 2. Sometimes. 3. No. 4. Don't know.

a) Material problems (food, lodging, unemployment)

b) Crises of faith, spiritual problems

c) Injustice, transgression of civil and human rights

d) Personal problems

e) Other (specify): _____ .

20. Which political party (legal or illegal) is closest to your way of thinking? 1. PDS. 2. PMDB. 3. PT. 4. PTB. 5. PDT. 6. Other (specify): _____. 7. Don't know.
21. Aside from political parties, are there other groups or organizations which are close to your way of thinking? (specify): _____.
22. How would you describe your political ideology? 1. Radical left. 2. Left. 3. Centre-left. 4. Centre. 5. Centre-right. 6. Right. 7. Radical right. 8. Don't know.
23. In the last 5 years, have you participated in any groups connected with the Church, aside from this group? (eg. devotional groups, Catholic schools, orphanages, etc.): _____.
24. In the last 5 years, have you participated in any secular groups or activities? (eg. neighbourhood associations, unions, cultural or professional associations, etc.): ___.

Part III - Group-related Attitudes and Behaviour

25. For how long have you been affiliated with this group? _____ yrs.
26. Do you attend the meetings of the group: 1. Regularly. 2. Once in a while. 3. I have attended once or twice. 4. Almost never or never. 5. Don't know/don't remember.

27. How did you enter the group? 1. Invited by a friend or relative. 2. Suggestion of priest, nun, or bishop. 3. Approached the group myself and asked to become a member. 4. Other (specify): _____. 5. Don't know/don't remember.
28. In your decision to join the group, to what extent were the following factors important? (possible responses: 1. Important. 2. More or less important. 3. Not important. 4. Don't know/don't remember.
- a) Desire to help others
 - b) Desire to enhance personal faith
 - c) Desire for greater human contact
 - d) Looking for an objective in life
 - e) Other (specify): _____.
29. Since joining the group, has your life changed in any of the following ways? (possible responses: 1. Enhanced. 2. Diminished. 3. Continues the same. 4. Don't know.)
- a) Relationship with the Catholic Church
 - b) Relationship with your family
 - c) Interest in the problems of others
 - d) Consciousness of social or political problems
 - e) Other (specify): _____.
30. Before you joined this group, how many of its members did you know already? 1. All or nearly all the members. 2. Some members. 3. None or almost none of the members. 4. Don't know/don't remember.

31. If you knew all or almost all of the members before joining, how did you know them? 1. We lived in the same neighbourhood. 2. We felt the same religious necessities. 3. We confronted the same socioeconomic problems. 4. Other (specify): _____. 5. Don't know/don't remember.
32. In your opinion, what are the most serious problems confronting people like yourself? _____.
33. Since entering the group, has your consciousness of these problems (referring to Question 32) increased? 1. A lot. 2. More or less. 3. A little. 4. Not at all. 5. Don't know.
34. Has the group offered you an opportunity to help resolve these problems (referring to Question 32)? 1. Absolutely. 2. More or less. 3. A little. 4. Not at all. 5. Don't know.
35. What do you think is the principal function of this group? _____.
36. How would you describe the commitment of ordinary members to this purpose (referring to Question 35) as compared to the commitment of group leaders? 1. The members are more committed than the leaders. 2. The leaders are more committed than the members. 3. The leaders and members are equally committed. 4. Don't know.

37. As a member of this group, how often do you normally participate in the following activities (possible responses: 1. Regularly. 2. Sometimes. 3. Almost never or never. 4. Not a group activity. 5. Don't know/don't remember.)

a) Preparation for the mass, or other sacraments

b) Reflection and discussion

c) Charity work or community assistance

d) Political or social consciousness-raising

e) Bible study to enhance faith

f) Other (specify): _____.

38. Upon which of these activities (referring to Question 37) would you like to see the group place more emphasis? 1. Preparation of mass or other sacraments. 2. Reflection and discussion. 3. Charity or community work. 4. Social or political consciousness-raising. 5. Bible study to enhance faith. 6. Other (specify): _____. 7. All activities are satisfactorily emphasized within this group. 8. Don't know.

39. Upon which of these activities (referring to Question 37) would you like to see the group place less emphasis? 1. Preparation of mass or other sacraments. 2. Reflection and discussion. 3. Charity or community work. 4. Social or political consciousness-raising. 5. Bible study to enhance faith. 6. Other (specify): _____. 7.

All activities are satisfactorily emphasized within this group. 8. Don't know.

40. Who decides what activities will be undertaken by this group? 1. Only the leaders. 2. Only the ordinary members. 3. The leaders after consulting the members. 4. The leaders and the members all together. 5. Other (specify): _____ . 6. Don't know.
41. How often do you participate in decision-making within this group? 1. Regularly. 2. Sometimes. 3. Almost never. 4. Not at all. 5. Don't know/don't remember.
42. In terms of its ability to achieve its objectives, how would you evaluate the organization of this group? 1. Well organized. 2. Organized satisfactorily. 3. Poorly organized. 4. Don't know.
43. How would you compare the present organization of this group with the way it was organized when you first joined? 1. Now better. 2. Now worse. 3. The same. 4. Don't know.
44. Do you own the home in which you live? 1. Yes. 2. No. 3. Don't know.
45. Group coordinator or conselho member? 1. Yes. 2. No.
46. Comments: _____ .

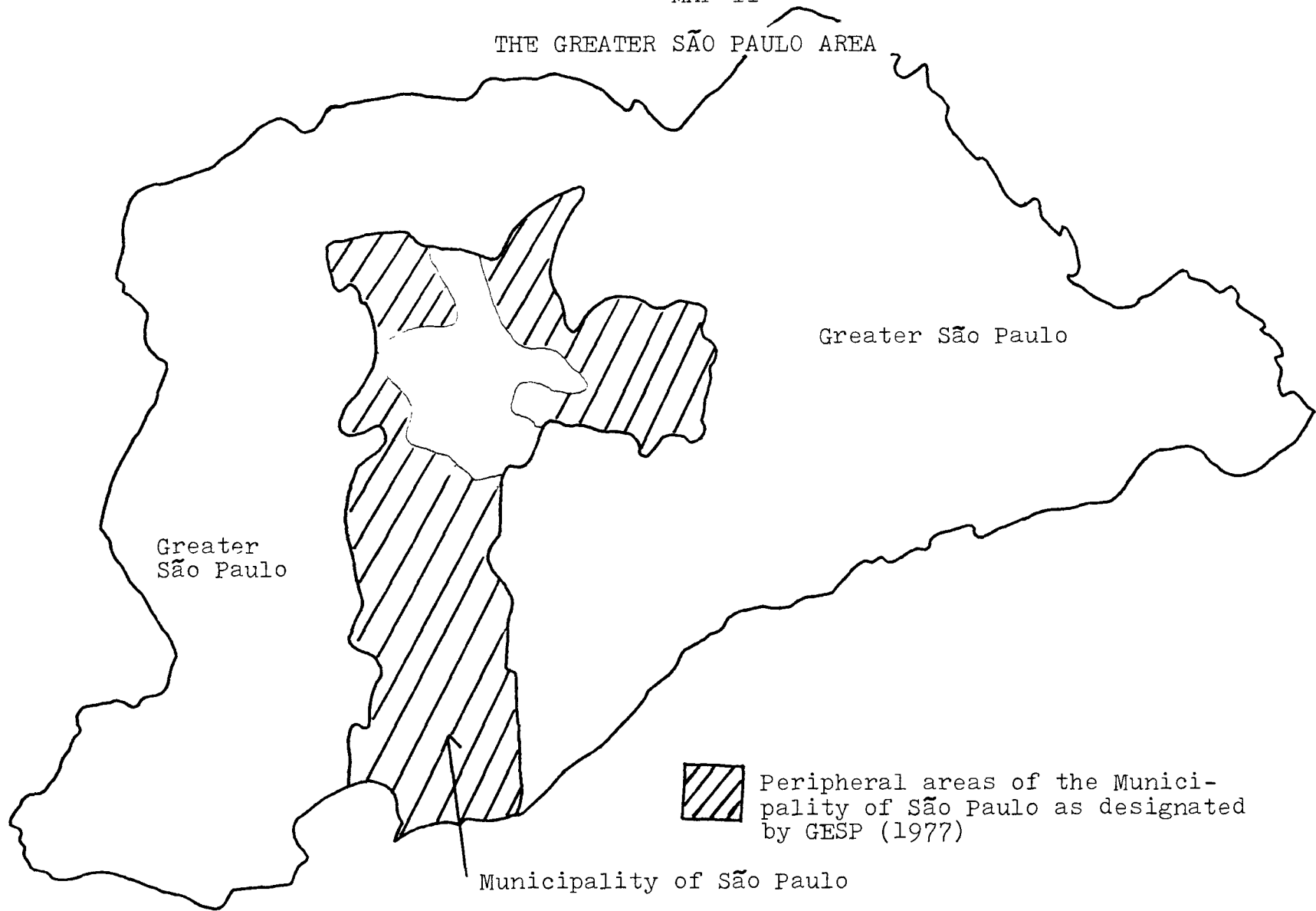
MAP I

BRAZIL: LOCATION AND MAJOR METROPOLITAN AREAS



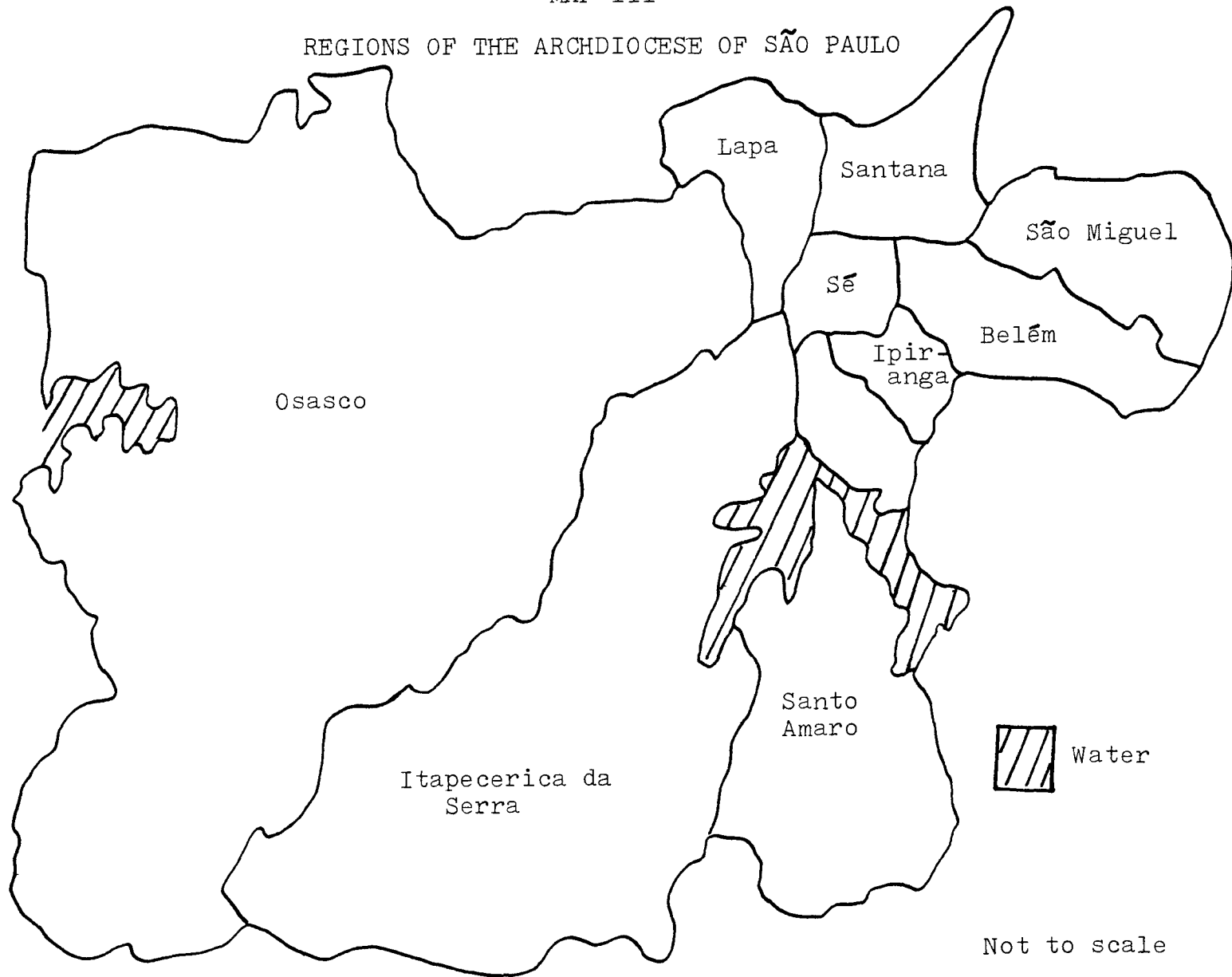
MAP II

THE GREATER SÃO PAULO AREA



MAP III

REGIONS OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF SÃO PAULO



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