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## REVIEW ESSAYS

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### RELIGION, SOCIETY, AND POLITICS: States of the Art

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- PUEBLA AND BEYOND: DOCUMENTATION AND COMMENTARY.* Edited by JOHN EAGLESON and PHILIP SCHARPER. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1979. \$7.95).
- THE CHURCH AND THE NATIONAL SECURITY STATE.* By JOSÉ COMBLIN. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1979. \$8.95).
- FRONTIERS OF THEOLOGY IN LATIN AMERICA.* Edited by ROSINO GIBELINI. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1979. \$9.95).
- THEOLOGIES IN CONFLICT: THE CHALLENGE OF JUAN LUIS SEGUNDO.* By ALFRED T. HENNELLY. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1979. \$8.95).
- THE HIDDEN MOTIVES OF PASTORAL ACTIONS: LATIN AMERICAN REFLECTIONS.* By JUAN LUIS SEGUNDO. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1978. \$5.95).
- THE AFRICAN RELIGIONS OF BRAZIL: TOWARD A SOCIOLOGY OF THE INTERPENETRATION OF CIVILIZATIONS.* By ROGER BASTIDE. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978. Pp. 494. \$28.50.)
- QUICHÉ REBELDE.* By RICARDO FALLA. (Guatemala: Editorial Universitaria de Guatemala, 1978. Pp. 574).

The space where religion and politics come together has lately become an area of significant conflict and change in Latin America. This should not be surprising; after all, religion and politics have been linked closely ever since the Conquest. Their relations, often supportive and at times in bitter conflict, have been worked out in a series of key institu-

tions and central norms of legitimate behavior in culture, politics, and social life as a whole. Despite this long history, recent changes are clearly more than just another turn in the cycle. Rather, they are part of an unusual burst of creative innovation, both in reality as lived and experienced throughout the area, and in common understandings of how best to approach and explain that reality. Reality and understandings of it obviously grow and change together. Any serious consideration of these issues must therefore address changing "states of the art" in several senses: the existential art of being religious and the intellectual art of study, reflection, and interpretation.

Living and studying religion and politics are related in various ways. First, political activism, conflict with the state, and increasingly violent oppression and abuse by public authorities has led many in the churches to new reflections on the political implications of faith and the religious meaning of political action in contemporary Latin America. Of course, oppression and violence are nothing new. But now they are increasingly directed at the churches, and the historical conjunction of expanding authoritarian regimes with religious institutions and individuals seeking to express their faith through social and political action has magnified vastly the importance of commitment and activism as dimensions of religious experience.<sup>1</sup> In the process, a great deal of borrowing and mutual influence (both unconscious and deliberate) is visible between religion and politics, to the point where conventional distinctions have become increasingly blurred, and received categories of analysis more and more inadequate. Living and studying religion and politics are also related in the great stress that current Latin American writing gives to experience as a source of religious values, motivations, and commitment. Religious values are thus no longer treated as eternal and unchanging, derived in perfect form from "official" (and hence) authoritative sources. Instead, they are drawn from and adapted to experience, particularly the experience of political action for the promotion of justice and "liberation."

Linking commitment, action, and reflection together, Latin American writers have moved to the cutting edge of innovation, attracting considerable international attention and admiration in the process. It is surely striking how an area once (and not so long ago) generally considered provincial and derivative in culture and institutions should now be so widely perceived as a source of significant innovation.<sup>2</sup> Even a brief glance at the titles that occasion this review reveals immediately the central role of Latin American writers, a role which should be acknowledged. Of the seven books reviewed here, four are by Latin Americans (Segundo, Falla, and the edited collections on Puebla and on Liberation Theology) and one is a North American's analysis of the work of a major Latin American theologian (Hennelly on Segundo). The two

remaining books include a work by "José" Comblin, a Belgian long resident in Latin America, and the recently translated book on Afro-Brazilian religions by the late French scholar, Roger Bastide.<sup>3</sup>

A close, mutual link between experience and reflection is visible in all these works, both in the specific cases they examine, where experience leads to and nurtures new ideas, and in the more general sense in which action and experience are taken as unique sources of insight into the meaning of politics and religion. This vital, dialectical relation between the arts of living and studying religion and politics suggests a process of considerable dynamism: participants are searching for new values, elaborating new categories of analysis, and creating new forms and meanings of action and reflection. Scholarship must clearly follow suit, taking a fresh look both at its subject and at itself, and rethinking central theories, methods, concepts, and definitions.

In this reconceptualization, it is important to take a dynamic and dialectical perspective. Thus, the relations of secular and religious beliefs and activities, or between events and processes at different levels, cannot be traced in a static, deductive fashion from any single point in the process. Rather, it is necessary to work out the full sociological links among institutional, ideological, and behavioral change. Such a perspective requires research that looks at groups and structures over time in specific historical contexts, working insofar as possible with *their* concepts and categories. These historical and phenomenological perspectives together direct attention to the formation of symbols and structures that express the life and self-understandings of a society, and to the sources of continuity, change, and conflict embedded in the process. This means engaging the substance of religion in a serious and systematic way, directing attention to relationships and to the elective affinities created between institutional and ideological change in different spheres and areas, and not simply to the accumulation of isolated cases that are then "fitted" into categories borrowed from other fields.<sup>4</sup>

For a long time, religion and politics in Latin America were comfortably addressed in the limited terms of "church and state" (e.g., Meham 1966). But in recent years, the accepted meanings of these terms have entered into crisis. Neither religion, politics, church, nor state is static: each changes continuously in a relation that extends beyond the bounds of any given set of structures to embrace general issues of power, of authority, and of the proper form and direction of action. Attempts at strict separation of religion and politics (e.g., Vallier 1972) are as flawed as were earlier efforts to address their relations in narrowly institutional terms. Each fails to take account of the real fusion of religious and political motivations and forms of action in everyday life.<sup>5</sup>

But rejection of such distinctions and separations does not imply that traditional topics should be simply abandoned. Scholars can and

should “rescue” them for contemporary analysis, taking off from the insights and concerns now being advanced by Latin American writers and activists. Two such “rescues” are particularly salient in Latin America, and will be explored in detail in the body of this essay: the emergence of Liberation Theology and the revival of interest in “church-state” issues. The development of Liberation Theology has made Latin America a major center of theological reflection, and contributed to a close integration between theology and contemporary experience. The relations of church and state, far from fading away, have become arguably more central now than ever before, as religious institutions striving to join faith and action clash with authoritarian states pursuing total security and control.

The reconceptualizations suggested thus far involve rethinking the “terms” of analysis (e.g., religion, politics, church, state) and attention to the changing relations among them. The creation of new understandings and syntheses of this kind is both an intellectual and an existential task, and its double nature is manifest in the works considered here. Therefore, the following discussion reflects a progression in thought and action. It begins with institutional and ideological transformations in the churches, through a look at the Puebla documents and commentaries; at Comblin’s analysis of *The Church and the National Security State*; and at central themes in Liberation Theology, which are presented in three works: the collection of essays edited by Gibellini, Hennelly’s recent *Theologies in Conflict*, and Segundo’s provocative *The Hidden Motives of Pastoral Action*. Segundo’s work in particular directs attention to the ways church structures project and reinforce hidden messages (of authority, hierarchy, order, passivity, fear, and the like), which can undercut or work directly against the church’s formal goals. Segundo’s penetrating analysis demands reconsideration of the close links of action, structure, and values, and provides a transition to the two excellent but quite different studies with which the essay closes: Bastide’s *The African Religions of Brazil* and Falla’s *Quiché Rebelde*, a study of the social, economic, and political context of religious conversion in a Guatemalan town.

Many of the issues raised here were discussed and debated extensively at the Third General Conference of Latin American Bishops, held in Puebla, Mexico, in early 1979. Puebla was intended to review the decade since the landmark second general CELAM conference at Medellín, Colombia in 1968, and to chart a course for the future. Controversy surrounds Puebla: the clash of perspectives at the meeting, the formulation of the Final Document, and the politics of the conference itself (selection of delegates, organization of factions, and so forth) have all drawn considerable attention.

The Eagleson and Scharper volume covers this ground in four

parts: "Puebla 1979," with two background articles by Penny Lernoux and Moises Sandoval; "The Pope at Puebla," with texts of John Paul II's speeches and general commentary by Virgilio Elizondo; "The Final Document," with an introductory essay by Archbishop Marcos McGrath accompanying the official translation; and "Beyond Puebla," with articles by Jon Sobrino, Joseph Gremillion, and Robert McAfee Brown assessing Puebla's long-term significance. The collection is quite useful as documentation, but the analysis is occasionally disappointing, and the reader seeking clear guidelines for reading the documents and setting them in context needs further help. Several articles (notably McGrath, Sobrino, and McAfee Brown) are excellent and suggestive, but others (like Lernoux) yield all too often to the ecclesiastical equivalent of kremlinology, and reduce the meetings to the interplay of politically identified and motivated factions.

But what were the key issues addressed at Puebla? How can we best understand them? Puebla's explicit theme was "evangelization" in the present and future of Latin America. Concern for evangelization brings together the church's evolving sense of self (symbols, structures, and group relations) with its visions of social and political reality in a search for meaningful ways to formulate and deliver the gospel message in the concrete conditions of Latin America. This combined focus means that understanding Puebla requires attention to explicitly religious goals and themes as well as to more obviously political arguments and interests. The politics of Puebla are important, both in the clash of groups at the meeting, and in the debates over what constitutes "politics" in the first place. But a narrowly political analysis will not do. Puebla was, after all, a meeting of bishops, ecclesiastical leaders concerned to guide their church in a difficult and confusing time. Their thoughts and actions have political consequences, but these cannot be understood without being grounded in an understanding of changing religious concepts and structures. As leaders of the institutional church, bishops feel a special obligation to preserve the institution itself as a source of continuity and a focus of shared values and loyalties over time and space. The way they do this depends on their images of the church and of religion itself, and cannot be simply deduced from their "politics" *tout court*.

The introductory essay by Penny Lernoux ("The Long Path to Puebla"), which should provide a sense of context and of the evolution of issues, is unfortunately the weakest of the lot. Lernoux is a knowledgeable journalist who has written extensively on church issues in Latin America, but her analysis here reduces most aspects of Puebla to a political conflict between "left" and "right." Her discussion of delegate selection, Liberation Theology and its opponents, the evolution of Catholic political strategies in Latin America, and the various drafts through which the Puebla documents passed is slanted, giving little

serious consideration to positions in the "center" and "right" of the church, and providing inadequate and uncritical discussion of the "left" itself.<sup>6</sup> Lernoux is particularly weak in relating the developments she studies to larger changes in the institutional church.

Subsequent essays by Sandoval and Elizondo are more helpful. Sandoval sets the matter of groups and factions more fully in context, while providing a useful critique of the press coverage at Puebla. He also details the drafting of the Final Document, noting the important role played by independent groups of experts, (identified, above all, with Liberation Theology) in providing alternative formulations, many of which were adopted. They both show how the process of events at Puebla and the speeches, contacts, and experiences that the Pope had in Mexico profoundly shaped his vision and the role he played at the conference. Elizondo is helpful here in clarifying the meaning, for John Paul II, of the defense of tradition and of "truth" in the church.

Aside from the texts of speeches and of the Final Document itself, the centerpiece of the book is the sparkling "Introduction and Commentary" to the Final Document provided by McGrath, who stresses the importance of the pastoral (as opposed to doctrinal) perspective of Puebla. Taking a pastoral perspective means giving less concern to precise formulations of doctrine, and more interest to approaching reality in a sensitive and open manner, searching for "signs of the times" and guidelines to action in contemporary experience. The pastoral focus of Puebla in his view thus implies greater flexibility and openness, a point also stressed in later articles that note the absence of condemnations of any kind at Puebla (e.g., Sobrino, p. 305). Here, Puebla clearly carries forward the pastoral tone of the influential *Gaudium et Spes* document of the Second Vatican Council, and continues the process of moving the church away from rigid, static pronouncements and towards statements that place doctrine and theology in the context of involvement in reality (p. 93).

McGrath works through the Final Document in a systematic way, locating different issues within the structure of the whole text, and placing each point in the context of more general ecclesiastical and political developments. He sees four major points as central to Puebla, and to the life of the church in Latin America. First is a return to biblical sources, a "mighty refreshment" (p. 97) for the church. Second is a pervasive stress on creating new, open structures for fitting the gospel message to the lives and circumstances of average people, particularly the poor and oppressed. In this process, the third point emerges, as the very meaning of "evangelization" is transformed. McGrath shows how the treatment of evangelization changed in Puebla, becoming more social and "worldly" as participants gave increasing attention to the nature of social and political reality and its interaction with more explicitly

religious concerns. A central element in this process was the concern of many bishops to free the church from traditional ties with the state. As these ties are cut, the church's character as a distinct, autonomous community is stressed, and the church is no longer coterminous with society and culture. McGrath realizes that ties that support also bind and limit, and he shows how (and why) movements for greater autonomy and freedom of action meet with considerable resistance. The military, for example, "have little tolerance for 'popular' expression, whether in 'secular' or religious circles. Because of a nineteenth century *forma mentis* that would reduce religion to the area of individual piety, they have little tolerance or sympathy for church statements or actions, whether by the hierarchy or at other church levels, in matters of social or political consequence" (p. 102).

Finally, McGrath provides a clear discussion of the meaning of political commitment, pastoral action, and the explicit "preferential option for the poor" taken at Puebla. A concern for linking evangelization to action runs through the Final Document, as the questions of who will be evangelized, where, by what agents, and to what purposes broaden the process beyond an exclusive concern with the message itself to a more general interest in pastoral and social action. In this way, what McGrath calls the "high theology" of Puebla is linked consistently to its practical expression: how to teach and live the gospels, how to create groups and tie them to the institutional church. McGrath rightfully notes that this "practical" side is not a spontaneous or natural process. New groups do not just happen. Rather, they emerge from the beginning in close relation to the church's institutions and traditions, and this ongoing link provides coherence, force, and continuity to the process as a whole.<sup>7</sup>

The three chapters in part 4 address the significance of Puebla for the Catholic Church in Latin America (Sobrino), for the Catholic Church in North America (Gremillion), and for the Protestant churches in North America (McAfee Brown). These authors stress elements of both innovation and continuity at Puebla, and point to several crucial gaps in the Puebla discussions. Thus, Sobrino sees a lack of serious self-criticism and attributes it to unwillingness to face up to the real conflicts and divisions within the churches, particularly over issues of social and political action (p. 299). For Sobrino, the social and political reality of Latin America was really the great unacknowledged actor at Puebla, reaching in to transform a set of "churchy" documents into a commentary on religion and society with far-reaching implications. He notes how the "ecclesial reality of Latin America," the life of the church community as a whole, intervened to transform and expand the ecclesiastical discussions of the bishops. In the process, he notes the close link between action and reflection: "If the ecclesial reality of Latin America managed

to interject itself sufficiently despite everything, the reason lies in what has happened in the last ten years. Despite mistakes and limitations, which cannot be denied, there has been much dedicated Christian creativity; there have been various forms of Christian living and practice; there has been Christian witness sealed with much bloodshed" (p. 296).

The concern for action, and particularly the "preferential option for the poor" taken at Puebla, is of major importance. It stimulates and legitimizes a wide range of political and social activities in which the church both *sides with* the poor (as a "church of the poor") and also *shares poverty* with the oppressed and downtrodden (as "a poor church"), demonstrating its faith and commitment not only through charity, but also through the witness of solidarity and shared experience. As suggested earlier, this "option" for the poor, in all its senses, takes on added significance when set against the expansion of authoritarian regimes in the region, which base their rule on the logic of an explicit "national security" ideology. It is important to bear in mind that these regimes generally have taken power in the name of "Western, Christian civilization," and typically see no contradiction between their stance and Christian principles. Indeed, extensive use is made of Christian images, symbols, and alliances wherever possible in the promotion of the new order.

These developments are explored in a systematic way by Comblin. He notes, to begin with, that the pattern of conflict between church and state is both a matter of practical control, as the state seeks to curb *any* autonomous group, and a question of ideological *scandal*. The military expect support in their defense of "Western, Christian civilization," and see opposition from the church as scandalous (pp. 80–81). He argues that the military's concept of Christianity as a static and conventional set of practices "fits" well with their general stress on imposed unanimity, force, and the suppression of change. "The reason the national security system so actively promotes the cultural patterns of Christianity is that it finds in them symbols which can be used to mobilize national feeling without disturbing public order. Dead religious symbols are highly anti-subversive. So the national security system seeks a fixed, passive, archaic Christianity consisting only of symbols, of culture, of the periphery" (p. 107).

*The Church and the National Security State* is a major contribution, showing how the church's emerging response to authoritarian rule is grounded in new theologies and related very closely to the evolving style of church ministries, with their stress on action, involvement, and solidarity. These developments make the church's response to attempts to limit action, and to confine it within older symbols and structures, very strong indeed. Facing the national security state, the church draws on new images of itself, mixing these with motives of institutional self-



defense. Comblin takes his analysis beyond day-to-day clashes to reflect on the long-term implications of this confrontation. What symbols are created and propagated by the church? How do they mold believers' views of themselves and their world? What models of the good life and the authentic person are provided? Comblin argues that the military see God's images as order, the state, law, and power. But

the Spirit is the divine principle of all freedom, the source of human liberty. Consequently, it is the principle of the liberation of persons from patterns of material and cultural domination. The Spirit is the contrary of the flesh, and flesh is human nature without liberty, human nature able to be manipulated by the state and power, human nature reduced to the condition of object. Indeed, "flesh" is the model citizen of a national security system. And the Spirit is actually the principle of destruction for such a system. (p. 112)

Comblin goes on to demonstrate how the old problem of church-state relations is revived around the issue of "security." For church and state alike, security has a geopolitical meaning. The state seeks security through a firm anticommunist alignment in the East-West struggle, and a drive to total control at home. In the past, the church clearly shared this vision, pursuing security through alliances with elites, governments, and a general identification with the "West" against communism. But disentanglement from predominantly European concerns opens church leaders to a future where security rests on popular participation and support—not alliances. The expansion and consolidation of Christianity in the Third World becomes a major objective. For Comblin, the way church leaders see and reach out to the mass of believers has a significant effect on the quality of life in church and society alike. "If the Church chooses the geopolitical strategy of seeking the protection and favor of the new totalitarian system, and such a system is the new oppressor of the Latin American masses, the external security of the church will be saved, but not the faith of the people. Just as happened in nineteenth-century Europe, the apostasy of the masses will be the price paid for the security of the ecclesiastical establishment. And if the poor leave the church, is the church still Christian?" (p. 207).

Comblin argues that in the current Latin American situation, defense of the church's institutional autonomy is increasingly important, both as a value in itself and as a shield for activities that the national security state persecutes and prohibits. Defending its own institutions, the church in effect defends pluralism, by maintaining open social spaces against the pressure of a state seeking total control. These changes in theology, institutional structures, and approaches to popular experience must be set together, for it is precisely their convergence, and their contrast to developments in the state, that give depth and force to the process as a whole. If the church's positions were simply a response to external pressure, with no roots in new understandings of

religion or of the church itself, they would not last long. Relaxed political circumstances would doubtless bring accommodation and withdrawal from dangerous commitments. But the fact that these innovations do rest on new thinking about religion gives them a footing within the church, and makes the appeal to action and experience legitimate in religious terms.

Much of the recent innovation in thinking about religion in Latin America has come from the writers and activists loosely collected under the rubric of Liberation Theology. *Frontiers of Theology in Latin America* is a useful introduction to this body of work, presenting a representative selection of major authors, themes, and points of view along with bibliographies of contributing authors and of other key figures. While limitations of space preclude a review of each article, several contributions stand out as exemplars of Liberation Theology themes, particularly those by Gustavo Gutierrez, Raúl Vidales, Leonardo Boff, Segundo Galilea, Juan Luis Segundo, Hugo Assmann, and José Míguez Bonino. Three central points underlie Liberation Theology, and their interaction yields its distinctive focus on faith, commitment, and action. These are first a concern with history, second a return to biblical sources, and third a stress on method.

The church is seen in historical terms, as a community of believers living and changing through time and space—a “pilgrim people of God” rather than a perfect set of structures, once given and eternally valid. Stress is thus placed on the experience of the community of believers comprising the church, and not on its hierarchical structures alone. History is not simply a stage on which pre-existing potentialities are fulfilled, as in much traditional Catholic thought. Change is welcomed as a source of new values and orientations, and leads Liberation Theology to set aside older positions of defensive insulation—“protecting the church from the world”—stressing instead a critical, active participation in the process of change.

In this positive view of change, the structures of both church and society lose their static and necessary quality: all can be changed by human action. By the same token, the church’s ties to any particular social order are open to challenge: all are the results of specific choices and configurations; all can be reconsidered and remade. From this point of view, understanding social change becomes crucially important, and Liberation Theology has pursued such understanding through extensive borrowing from the social sciences, and particularly from Marxism. Concepts and tools of analysis have been taken over, organizational models have been imitated, and a series of collaborations and joint actions between Christian and Marxist groups encouraged.<sup>8</sup> In the process, Marxism is often equated with scientific analysis, and joint action seen as the necessary path to building a more just social order. As Gutierrez notes,

all this means entering a different world, "a wholly different way of perceiving ourselves as human beings and as Christians" (p. 17).

The return to biblical sources (also noted by McGrath for Puebla) is closely related. Stressing historical experience, Liberation Theology turns to Old Testament images of God as an active presence in the world. Here, belief and faith are most completely expressed in actions to promote justice, and attention turns from elaborating known doctrine and applying it to the case at hand to a social analysis based on insights and concerns that spring from common action.

These considerations together make issues of method central to Liberation Theology. Any reflection or analysis occurs within a particular historical situation, and is therefore necessarily and properly limited. Theology is no exception. It is an interpretive discipline, shaped and limited by the context in which it evolves, and by the interests and experiences of theologians and of the Christian community itself. Vidales' essay on "Methodological Issues in Liberation Theology" is particularly useful on these points, showing how Liberation Theology's positions stem from involvement in struggles for liberation. They are a critical reflection on the process, taken from within. Pretensions to dispassionate neutrality are abandoned as unrealistic and hypocritical.

The historical, biblical, and committed character of Liberation Theology has major implications for the creation and use of religious symbols. Throughout Latin America, a struggle is clearly under way to control and orient these symbols, infusing them with particular social and political content. Comblin's comments, cited earlier, address these issues, and clearly Liberation Theology as a whole sees the reformulation of central Christian symbols as a necessary and legitimate task. The treatment of Jesus Christ ("Christology") is a good illustration, and is represented in the Gibellini collection, above all by Boff and Assmann. Boff sees Christ as a liberator, and stresses his links with the poor and oppressed. Boff is sensitive to the charge that Liberation Theology "sociologizes" religion, substituting political for spiritual commitments. He therefore takes great pains to stress the continued spiritual and transcendental impact of Christ's message, while tying it closely to contemporary actions and problems. Spiritual and sociopolitical dimensions cannot be rigidly separated; they form part of one history, for eschatology begins here and now (pp. 118, 128). Assmann sums up the Christological debates well. With characteristic bluntness, he associates different Christs with different political positions: the Christ of the 1973 coup in Chile, the leftist Christ of class consciousness, and the ambiguous Christ of "third way" approaches (p. 141). But he goes further, arguing that theology cannot simply shift the direction of the symbol—from right to left. Paths of action must be laid out and choices made. Compromise is rejected as hypocritical self-delusion:

The supposedly apolitical Christologies are really theological (or better, ecclesiastical) Yalta Pacts, because they divide life and the world into "spheres of influence," and this division is profoundly political in character. They always end up promoting "peaceful coexistence." "Divide and conquer" is the watchword, so we get a divided history, a divided world, and a division of labor. Who would keep us from asking the basic question: With whom is the pact made? (P. 149)

In Liberation Theology, action is discussed typically in terms of *praxis*. The concept of *praxis*, borrowed from Marxist thought, refers to action that reflects and builds on a consistent, shared set of insights and experiences. Concern for *praxis* thus looks to self-awareness and to the expression of thought in action. This carries with it an implicit commitment to creating new forms of organization, as self-aware actions generate new ways of living and working together.<sup>9</sup> For Liberation Theology, *praxis* is thus both a requirement of faith and a source of faith and values: religious people act to promote justice as an expression of their faith, and the very experience of such action itself nurtures and molds faith, giving it new vigor and content and creating the bases of stronger and more meaningful community.

The *praxis* Liberation Theology promotes is not narrowly political—a matter of short-term tactics and alignments alone; rather, it addresses the transformation and liberation of a broad range of social forms. A good example is the issue of how the church can best understand and approach "popular" culture, organization, and forms of action. Galilea stresses the need to develop new forms of spirituality, linked closely to politics through ties to the poor, and through becoming poor personally. Both are important. By itself, commitment to the poor can end up simply in paternalism or charity, while personal poverty alone can lead to the isolation of individual asceticism. Combining the two grounds spirituality in the *praxis* of shared experience—the "other" becomes the poor, not in abstract terms, but in the concrete faces of peasants, workers, and the oppressed. To Galilea, faith, solidarity, and shared action give new meaning to the hope of which the churches speak. "Here, hoping means having confidence in the people of Latin America; in their culture, their region, their religiosity, and their ability to create a better society. It means confidence in their ability to do what others before them could not or did not do, to find alternatives and approaches that had not been foreseen by any political analysis" (p. 182).

This overview of Liberation Theology reveals the extent of the challenges it poses. Theology is "rescued" from the libraries and placed in the thick of action; religious faith and practice are expanded to embrace commitment, solidarity, and action for justice. These general reflections set the stage for a closer look at one major thinker, Juan Luis

Segundo. Hennelly's *Theologies in Conflict* provides a thorough, clear, and balanced review of Segundo's work, setting it well in the context of the kinds of issues and developments considered here. Central elements of Liberation Theology are laid out in the early chapters: the stress on redefining faith in relation to action for justice (chapter 1); the commitment to the poor and to seeing church and world through the "optic of the poor" (chapter 2); and the centrality of method (chapter 3). Together these make for a practical and critical theology, which is firmly rooted in history through Segundo's concept of a hermeneutic (or interpretive) circle. Theology lies within the circle of interpretation. Thus it is not the pursuit of some abstract, "final" truth, but rather comprises a series of reflections taken from inside a particular reality. No interpretation is neutral or complete; all are shaped by historically defined interests, values, and structures. For Segundo, progress in theology (as in all things) thus comes not by analysis and deduction alone, but rather as part of the process of experiencing reality, challenging its presuppositions and established forms, and moving in this way to new visions and structures of action.

Hennelly goes on to explore the implications of this stance for many aspects of Segundo's work: concepts of the church, the nature of ideology, the role of force and violence, new dimensions of spirituality, relations to Marxism, and the like. A complete review is impossible here, but, as we have seen, relations with Marxism are particularly important for Liberation Theology, and Segundo has long been one of the foremost exponents of this theme. In chapter 9, "The Challenge of Marxism," Hennelly provides a useful discussion, showing how, for Segundo, the challenge of Marxism needs to be seen in light of the fact that the churches already exist (and have always existed) in an ideologically suffused reality. It is hypocritical for church leaders to condemn Marxism or commitments to socialism as ideological choices from which the church should abstain. As Segundo points out, this assumes that the existing situation is ideologically neutral, that capitalism is reality. In this way, debates over Marxism are expanded to include issues of ideology and commitment in general. Segundo shares the general tendency of Liberation Theology to equate Marxism with "science" and "scientific analysis." Moreover, his commitment to seeing events and processes through the "optic of the poor" obviously makes Marxism's historic concern with mass organization, and its position as a purported "science of the masses," especially attractive for Segundo. Finally, for Segundo, as for Liberation Theology as a whole, the pervasive stress on being specific and historically concrete makes the link between the poor of the gospels, the proletariat of Marxist thought, and the peasants, workers, and oppressed peoples of Latin America direct and relatively uncomplicated.

All these points reflect a fundamental concern with praxis: a desire to believe, understand, and act more authentically and effectively. This demands new tools for analysis of Latin American societies (hence the turn to Marxism) and a simultaneous reworking of theology and of the church itself as necessary prerequisites for "reaching into" that reality. But a contradiction immediately arises: how can we speak of "reaching into" a reality in which the church is already deeply involved? This contradiction is clarified, though not wholly eliminated, by recalling the church's independent organizational identity, and the many ways in which its life as an institution reflects and reinforces dominant social patterns.

These considerations bring us to Segundo's *The Hidden Motives of Pastoral Action*, in which the fears and anxieties built into church structures are laid bare in a perceptive and far-reaching commentary. Segundo argues that past church strategies and organizations reflected a desire to ensure a captive and pliable audience. Believers were a passive clientele of consumers of Christianity, and organized into "closed milieux" whose members were all Christian by definition. Catholic schools, hospitals, trade unions, professional groups, and welfare organizations of all types are instances of this kind of structure. Such closed milieux are a survival of Christendom, the medieval ideal of a society jointly ruled by church and state, where each is governed by Christian values. Such structures no longer fit the changing societies of Latin America, but Segundo notes that many church leaders continue to operate as if they still existed. If the decay of old structures is recognized at all, the response of these leaders is not to search for new forms of action, but rather to stress the *re-Christianization* of society. Society is thus to be reconquered for religion, and a new Christendom created: more up to date perhaps, but still grounded in the concept and practice of closed milieux.

To Segundo, this is a misguided and self-defeating endeavor. The old network of closed milieux cannot and should not be rebuilt. Indeed, the very attempt produces not increased faith and belief, but simply the dispensing (and passive consumption) of security (pp. 37–40). The church is trapped in a vicious circle. To maintain its status as an automatic "majority Christianity," artificial institutions are developed. These require considerable resources, which lead the church to alliances with public and private power. In the process, a damaging paradox emerges: "In order to be 'the church of the poor,' it must first be the 'church of the rich'. And that is how it is viewed by the growing social awareness of Latin Americans" (p. 44). Moreover, such external alliances and dependencies nurture an inner structure of authoritarian relations characteristic of the Christian institutions of closed milieux. Believers are seen as a "flock" to be protected, organized, and defended, but not listened

to or shared with. As a result, participation in such institutions is limited, frustrating, and lacking in conviction." In other words, the Latin American church is being emptied of inner substance with each succeeding generation, though this may not seem apparent in quantitative terms" (p. 51).

This vicious circle ultimately rests on fear, and Segundo's discussion of fear in the church (chapter 5) is compelling and original. He notes that bishops and priests, raised in a clerically controlled and socially predominant church, are afraid of change. They fear accepting minority status and competing for members. On one level, they are afraid of losing the faithful to secular competitors; but this concern masks a deeper fear that the faith itself is weak, and will necessarily lose out in any open contest. Finally, they fear that without the compulsion and deference built into closed milieux, they themselves will become useless, rejected, and ignored.

Segundo's rich and suggestive analysis of these fears throws considerable light on a problem that has often puzzled me as a researcher, namely, the fear and certainty of loss and defection one often encounters among bishops facing the possibility of open dialogue and competition with non-Catholic groups. One might expect that firm belief and faith would give security, but instead, uncertainty and hesitation are common. Clearly, the problem is not one of personal conviction alone. The structural routines of Christian institutions and the expectations of automatic obedience and deference that they embody clearly contribute to a reliance on compulsion: no other way is known. For Segundo, fear of freedom lies at the root of the problem, and one quotation from many possible examples illustrates the blunt and deeply probing nature of his critique:

Why is it that a Sister of Charity can talk about Christianity in a hospital but not with equal effect in a factory or on a street corner? The answer is easy enough to find. The sick patient cannot take off at will if he is bored by what the nun is saying. He cannot offend her either, because he is directly or indirectly dependent on her for many of the hospital services he receives. And if he is seriously ill, he is also afraid.

So difficult and so obvious is the pastoral transition from use of pressure to reliance on personal freedom that more than one observer gets the same impression about the pastoral effort of the church in Latin America. It is clearly a pastoral effort aimed primarily at children, sick people, and the dying—which is to say, at people whose ability to freely walk away from the message is seriously diminished. (Pp. 68–69)

Fear and insecurity together produce an obsessive concern with prudence, a "don't rock the boat" attitude. But what is the risk being so carefully avoided? To Segundo, when superficial concerns are stripped away, what appears is the "risk" that the church will be forced to rely only on the gospels, and that they will not work. "There is little discus-

sion of the issue precisely because no one wants to admit that this is the risk that the church is trying to avoid by relying on prudence instead . . . we sense a fear that the gospel message on its own has little to say and even less to attract people in Latin America" (pp. 93, 95).

Moving beyond criticism, Segundo lays out the bases of "A Different Approach" (chapter 6), linking the content of the message to reformulation of the structure of church organization and communication. He stresses evangelization: how to conceive and spread the "good news" of the gospels in today's Latin America, and builds his argument around three central points: communicating only the essentials of the Christian message; communicating it as good news; and adding nothing further except at a pace that will allow the essential element to remain precisely that (p. 111). Let us consider these points more closely.

Communicating only the essentials means stripping away all externalities, including the recourse to institutions and to the pressures of conformity (p. 113). Communicating it as good news means seeing the gospel once again as a powerful and attractive message, and thus being willing to "announce" it in a way that assumes that a free, unconstrained choice can be made to accept it. Communicating the gospel as good news involves listening as well as talking—and learning from experience. This goes against the grain of a tradition based on isolating Christians (for their own protection) from the outside world (p. 114). Finally, adding nothing further except at a pace that will allow the essential element to remain precisely that means matching communication to a life in accordance with the message. For Segundo, only authentic praxis can overcome the fears and destructive self-limitations of the present. Thus:

Even if a Christian community is proclaiming the essential message *in words*, it is not and cannot be evangelizing if it judges historical realities in terms of criteria that do not reflect the same proper hierarchy. If we prefer a project with a Christian label, then we are submerging the essential element in the secondary. If we prefer the undifferentiated unity of Christians bereft of liberation impact over commitments to liberation that are shared by some Christians and non-Christians, then once again we are letting secondary elements drown out the essential core of the Christian message. It is most important, therefore, that the matter of pace or rhythm be extended to praxis. (P. 119)

In sum, Segundo argues for a radical simplification and purification of the church's structures. Traditional ties with dominant institutions and claims to protection and special privilege must be abandoned. In the process, the pretension of automatic majority status is laid aside, and the church resumes its original character as a "heroic minority"—a community built on freely given and consciously chosen commitment. For Segundo, freedom—in both thought and action—is central. Words are not enough, for traditional structures carry hidden messages, promoting a life of subordination and passive obedience. Authoritarian



messages of this kind within the church easily spill over to social and political life in general, making the "church of the poor" a paternalistic dispenser of charity and psychological security, not an organizer of or participant in change.<sup>10</sup> To Segundo, only a church which accepts and encourages freedom can create a vital and meaningful community in today's Latin America.

To this point, I have emphasized the ties between ideological and institutional change in the churches, and their relation to social and political transformations in Latin America. I have taken a phenomenological perspective, looking from inside religious institutions out to other institutions and social forces. But complete analysis must go beyond the norms that guide formal institutions to incorporate the concepts and experiences that move actual communities and individuals. Bastide and Falla address these issues well, contributing notably to our understanding of "popular" religion, and its relation to economic, political, and cultural change. Before examining these books in detail, a brief word on the meaning of "popular" is in order. The term "popular" (as in "popular" arts, culture, or religion) implies a notion of what constitutes the "populus," and usually denotes groups of lower-class or caste-like status—urban proletarians, peasants, blacks, Indians, and so forth. This underlying dimension of inequality and subordination is of critical importance, for it directs attention to the location of popular cultural (and specifically religious) expressions in the historical formation of such groups. Clearly, popular processes and expressions do not emerge in isolation, as the unfolding of some "natural" pattern of development. They are formed in a close, long-term relation to national and international forces and institutions of various kinds. This class-based and historical character means that popular religion is best addressed in terms of the way its characteristic ideas, symbols, and practices express the ties that bind popular groups to central economic, cultural, and political processes, giving meaning to the events that shape daily life (cf. Della Cava 1968 and 1970, or Taussig 1977).

Bastide's work, originally published in France in 1960, sees Afro-Brazilian religions as a dynamic system of cultural self-expression and self-transformation. Analysis of religion is placed in the context of a general concern with acculturation and the "interpenetration" of civilizations. For Bastide, social life is primarily a symbol-making, significance-creating activity. In this light, the African religions of Brazil are neither simple reflections of economic processes nor static representations of existing social patterns. Instead, religion creates and transmits key elements of identity and meaning, building organizational and behavioral forms to express and sustain them. "Collective representations, group mental images, cannot survive without material substrata, without well-organized interaction between the members of the group. Forgetting is

always the result of the destructuring of the transplanted society. But the fact that traditional values can survive only by reincarnating themselves in a set of institutions and interrelations does not mean that it is those structures which produce the values" (p. 395).

Bastide consistently mixes elements of mentality with questions of structure and style, confronting expressions of religion with the impact of economic, social, and political change. The goal is to place symbolic variation alongside economic, social, and political variation, exploring their interaction from various angles and in different arenas. The method is comparative history, "staying with one and the same society as it destructures and restructures itself, developing its modes of production now slowly, now more abruptly, over the years, and creating new cultural works, so that we can then compare these diverse factors in the evolution of the chosen society" (p. 17).

*The African Religions of Brazil* is divided into two parts. The first explores "The Dual Heritage"—the impact of Portugal and Africa on Brazil, and their interaction there. Chapters here range over such topics as slave protest and religion (chapter 3), ethnic stratification in the churches (chapter 5), black Islam (chapter 7), and survivals of African religions (chapter 6). Another eight chapters in part 2, "A Sociological Study of the Afro-Brazilian Religions," explore the ethnography of these religions and their evolution over time. The analysis of part 1 lays the basis for answers to what Bastide sees as the central question his work addresses, namely the choice of cultural (especially religious) or political expressions of black resentment and resistance (p. 50). Religion and politics are seen as alternatives, with characteristic forms of action and different satisfactions. The difference between them does not imply that one is more important or more basic than the other; rather, as Bastide points out, in each instance one must ask "which offered the sweeter victory?" (p. 342).

Bastide begins with a detailed study of Brazilian slavery, exploring the ways in which a heterogeneous group of Africans, uprooted forcibly from the contexts in which their religions had evolved and made sense, managed in the process to create and maintain vital means of action and expression (pp. 160–61). The "survival" of African religions operates through the use of older symbols as a basis for creating new social and artistic expressions that sustain group solidarity. "In brief, the superstructure had to recreate a society. The movement is not an upward one from the morphological base toward the world of symbols and collective representations, but the opposite: a downward movement of those values and collective representations toward the institutions and groupings" (pp. 56–57). The central fact of slavery places Afro-Brazilian religions as part of a subordinate subculture in a setting of intense exploitation and oppression. In this regard, Bastide's analysis of the ties

between black resistance and religion is noteworthy, as is his discussion of the integration of black devotions within the Brazilian Catholic Church. He shows how conversion to Christianity was often seen as a means of breaking slave resistance, and hence encouraged by the elite.

The detailed ethnography of part 2 stresses the "dense, teeming vitality" (p. 221) of the Afro-Brazilian religions, and their central role in the development of a sense of self among black Brazilians. Here, Bastide fills out the dimensions of choice between political and religious expressions. Religious rebellion asserts identity and self-worth in contrast to white society, while political movements demand adaptation to and acceptance of the models of group activity in that society. Bastide addresses concrete cases of the evolution of African religions and their dynamic relation to socioeconomic and political change above all in two chapters. Chapter 13, "Two Types of Disintegration," looks at rural *candomblé* and urban *macumba*, tracing the "disintegration" of each either as the effect of growing integration into dominant society or as part of the disintegration of all ties within the group. Chapter 14, "The Birth of a Religion," carries the analysis forward in a study of evolving black religious vehicles and styles of mysticism in the cities. Here, Bastide's underlying premise that religion and politics are alternatives comes to the surface. Religion is mystical, politics is practical; religion celebrates the divine past, politics looks to organization and conflict in the present. In sum: "Religion and politics respond to two different attitudes toward the new social structures, although they both rest on the same foundation of resentment . . . the behavior of resignation is different from the behavior of rebellion" (p. 341).

In the last analysis, religion for Bastide appears as a surrogate for political action. The argument is rich and suggestive, but one could easily quarrel with the idea of surrogates, for it rests on an overly neat separation of religious from political motives and expressions. If human behavior has some unity, then ideas, structures, and styles of action central to religion necessarily spill over to shape experience and understandings in other spheres of life. The problem is one of synthesis, not distinction or separation. Perhaps Bastide was simply not dialectical enough, for while he was willing to address the relation between changes in religion and in other social and institutional orders, he held the two solutions (religion and politics) rigidly apart. But it is precisely this view that is challenged by the transformations so visible in Latin American Catholicism. The changes reviewed here rest directly on a new synthesis of religion and politics at all levels. In this regard, one wonders what Bastide would have made of the intense, critical political involvement of the Brazilian Catholic Church in recent years, and particularly of the explosive growth of "base communities," especially in the area of São Paulo, to which he devoted major attention. These base

communities (which received special, favorable mention at Puebla) seem to combine religion and politics in several ways: as shields for prohibited political activity; as experiments in the incorporation of egalitarian, democratic, social relations into the structure of religious organizations; and in the close relation that emerges between experience in such groups and a pattern of Catholicism that is much more open to critical social and political involvement (Bruneau 1980, Della Cava 1978, LADOC 1980).

The final book to be considered here, Ricardo Falla's *Quiché Rebelde* is quite simply one of the most intellectually stimulating and theoretically rich works on Latin American society that I have come across in some time. It calls to mind the depth and insights of Max Weber's studies of religion and capitalism and shares many of its central substantive concerns. Falla is at once both more specific and more general than Bastide. He is more specific in his intensive focus on the experience of one small town, San Antonio Ilotenango, in the province of Quiché in Guatemala. But he is also more general in the way religious changes here (conversions from *costumbre* to Catholic Action) are linked to a clear and penetrating analysis of the intersect between economic transformation, changing patterns of power, and the impact of political events. This complex long-term process is explored in exemplary fashion, in a richly detailed account setting the experience of conversion in a web of events in which individual, community, national, and international forces are systematically related. In Falla's words, "La novedad de este estudio dentro de la literatura antropológica de Guatemala es, pues, el estudio del proceso mismo de la conversión religiosa dentro de un marco sociológico que, partiendo del hogar, se entronca con las fuerzas político-religiosas de la comunidad y de la Nación" (p. 49).

The origins of *Quiché Rebelde* warrant special attention. Falla, a Guatemalan Jesuit, originally went to San Antonio Ilotenango to study the impact of demographic pressure, but once there he found that demographic pressure was not very significant. Instead, two issues dominated the local scene: conversions from *costumbre* to Catholic Action and the introduction and use of chemical fertilizers. The "rebelde" in the title of the book grows out of these linked transformations. It refers not to political revolt or guerrilla struggle, but rather to rebellion within the town against the domination and control of traditional religious specialists, the *zahorines*—a rebellion supported by and in close association with economic change.

These processes are explored in a series of chapters bearing on the spread of commerce and the growth of a class of independent merchants in the town; associated social reorganizations such as new patterns of marriage, stratification, and political conflict; the process of conversion itself, for individuals, and its diffusion within the com-

munity; and the impact within San Antonio of the increasing availability of new external sources of power. Access to external money, power, and support is a central theme throughout, and changes in individuals and in the structures of community life are systematically related to the appearance of new resources and alternatives at the local level.

The growth of commerce and the emergence of a class of independent merchants impinges on religious change and conversion in several ways. The abolition of debt peonage and the pardoning of accumulated agrarian debts throughout Guatemala in 1934 opened new possibilities for the accumulation of wealth and the stimulation of capitalist enterprise in San Antonio. Capitalism had come to the town earlier, but with disastrous consequences. In the Liberal Reform of the 1870s, communal lands were broken up and sold, and the town moved to a pattern of defensive insulation and minimal stratification. The consolidation of shared poverty and closing of ranks against the outside characterize subsequent development. But the new penetration of capitalism, by opening up contacts to the outside, brought opportunity and wealth into the community with different and far-reaching effects.

Independent and externally focused trade is closely associated with religious conversion in two ways. First, commerce led to the creation of new bases of power, and made possible resistance to the demands of the *zahorin*, who required large payments for services such as curing, exorcism, or protection against witchcraft. Moreover, commerce represented a general opening to the outside world. Here Falla shows a close correspondence in the values of the good businessman and the convert. Each looks to the world outside San Antonio, and derives power from external sources—trade for the merchant and symbols and organizational links for the convert. Merchants were often carriers, both by example and literally (in their long-haul trucking), of new religious values.

Hay una serie de valores comune al comerciante y al converso, lo que da pie para pensar que ambos procesos se reforzaron mutuamente. No sólo están entre dichos valores aquellas cualidades, que probablemente se adquieren o perfeccionan, de imaginación, lucha, y planificación para obtener más miembros, sino aquellos que implican una apertura al mundo de fuera de la comunidad, tanto para comprender sus razonamientos como para confiar en sus hombres, y predisponen favorablemente las actitudes para la recepción de creencias nuevas. Además, la capitalización y la conversión son dos casos de la misma experiencia de la ruptura de las normas de redistribución de la comunidad. (Pp. 193–94)

Looking at social structure, Falla pays particular attention to shifting patterns of dependence in the community. Marriage patterns are a good case in point, with notable changes in age at marriage, in the spread of divorce, and in the process of spouse selection. In the previous “closed” economy of scarcity, sons depended on their fathers for access to land, and hence to future livelihood. Thus they were bound to accept

a father's choice of mate—there was no alternative. Choice of spouse was also influenced by established relations between different lineages, and ties of godparenthood, which retained power through their central role in nets of mutual support and reciprocity providing insurance against economic disaster. But the advent of commerce and the presence of a religious alternative led to new patterns: “Con el apareamiento de la AC [Catholic Action] se rompió la alianza de compadrazgo con un hogar, por medio de la cual todos los hijos debían tener el mismo padrino y se buscó un nuevo padrino, distinto del de los primeros hijos, entre los miembros de la AC” (p. 244).

Political change is examined in terms of the evolution of civil authorities and patterns of conflict, setting these against changes in access to land. In the process, Falla shows how what are often taken as “traditional” authorities or patterns of belief are not simply natural expressions of community life. Rather, their present form is a recent historical creation, tied to the original penetration of capitalism in the 1870s. While the Liberal Reforms of this period led to great loss of land, they also stabilized the boundaries of the community, putting an end to land disputes with neighboring *municipios*. In the process, the “enemy without” (neighboring groups invading local lands) disappeared, but the enemy moved within, and accusations of witchcraft mushroomed. Lacking resources, and unable to control the economic and political forces affecting their lives, local residents turned to magic, and to the *zahorín*, whose power grew from this point until the economic opening of the late 1930s. The growing penetration of the outside world then combined with the personal experience of scarcity in the town to encourage resistance to the demands of the *zahorín*, making conversion a statement of personal and community transformation. Falla documents the close ties between conversion and external penetration in a series of individual case studies and a fascinating analysis of the geographical spread of conversion within the town (see the maps on pp. 366–68).

Obviously Catholic Action appeared on the local scene at a particularly appropriate moment. But why did it appear just then? How are the conditions of its availability tied to larger social and political transformations? Falla shows how the emergence of Catholic Action was closely linked to changes in national politics. From 1945 to 1954, Guatemala underwent a period of intense political reform and turmoil, which brought new forces (above all on the left) onto the national scene. To a large extent, the church's renewed concern with towns like San Antonio—expressed in the sponsorship of Catholic Action, the organization of a radio station in Quiché province, and the attempt to provide resident clergy on a regular basis—can be attributed to its violent opposition to the revolutionary governments of Arévalo and Arbenz, and to the vigorous anticommunism of church leaders (pp. 435–39). As Falla

notes, many outside powers appeared and acted in San Antonio over the years: the governor of the province, the church, missionaries, Christian Democrats (with their international links to West Germany), and supposedly nonpolitical groups like CARE. As power diffused, the focus of conflict shifted. Through the 1930s, conflict centered on such material issues as debt. Then, as local scarcity was alleviated and new resources came into play, symbolic and legitimacy issues became salient. Material conflicts returned to center stage with local and national struggles over land reform during the Arbenz regime, yielding once again to symbolic outlets with his overthrow in 1954:

El conflicto de legitimación interna de símbolos comenzó a nacer como respuesta de individuos a lo que ellos consideraban explotación de parte de los manipuladores de dichos símbolos, los Zahorines. La oposición nacional, entonces, con tener intereses diversos, le confirió poder a la lucha contra la validez de dichos símbolos, y la Iglesia, como entidad de fuera, sirvió para la legitimación de símbolos nuevos.

Al reprimirse, con la caída de Arbenz, el conflicto por tierras dentro del municipio, y fuera de él en toda la República, la pugna por símbolos interna al Municipio se recrudeció. La Iglesia, legitimadora de los nuevos símbolos, representaba a nivel nacional el triunfo de dicha represión. (Pp. 510–11)

In closing, Falla raises a question implicit throughout his work: To what extent does conversion imply liberation, and does it lead to a “better,” “freer,” more open, and fulfilling life? The answer is mixed. Initially, conversion was tied to liberation from the oppression of the *zahorín* and, through a general opening, to new ideas and experiences. The close ties between conversion and capitalism clearly stimulated a burst of innovation, organization, and activity. But after a while, new patterns of stratification and inequality become consolidated in the wealth and status of local merchants. Catholic Action itself then becomes less a heroic minority (to borrow Segundo’s phrase), and more a part of the established structure of power (pp. 524–25).

Together Falla and Bastide throw a great deal of clear light on popular religion. Each builds a strong case for looking at popular religion in terms of the historical formation of popular groups and the relation of their religious beliefs and practices to broader economic, social, and political transformations. Popular religion thus appears closely and necessarily linked to institutions of various kinds, and emerges as a creative process of “making sense” out of changing circumstances while building structures to act within them. It is useful to consider these two authors together at the close of this essay, for their work attests to the complexity and continued power of religion in society, a power rooted in religion’s unique ability to fit particular experiences into general patterns of significance and action. When such transformations at the individual level are systematically related to the institutional and ideological

changes so visible in the churches (and in the structures of the national security state), the basic elements are in place for future work.

Such "future work" includes both the existential work of creating new syntheses of religious and political action and meaning and the intellectual work of study and reflection. The books and experiences considered here document the close association of progress in the arts of academic study with sustained, receptive attention to the changing arts of living as religious individuals and institutions in Latin America today. In both life and study, religion must be engaged in the context of economic, cultural, and political transformations, and its relation to these processes considered in a sensitive and historical manner. The striking creativity of recent thinking about religion in Latin America has clearly been nourished by openness to change and to participation in the historical dynamics of religious and cultural expression. The sustained, powerful development of the several states of the art considered here attests to the strength and vitality of this perspective.

#### NOTES

1. The increasing salience of conflicts over human rights is a good illustration. See Smith 1980.
2. The popularity of the "new novel," the impact of dependency theory, and the influence of Liberation Theology all attest to this process.
3. The central role of Orbis Books, the publishing arm of the Maryknoll Fathers, also warrants special mention. Five of the seven books reviewed here were published by Orbis Books, which, since its foundation a decade ago, has pursued a vigorous program of translation and publication, bringing developments in Latin America to wider attention. Anyone interested in these issues owes a major debt of gratitude to Orbis Books, and to the Maryknoll Fathers.
4. A good example of the problem of externally imposed categories is the generally unfruitful effort to classify religious groups or individuals by political criteria alone: for example, as radical, moderate, or conservative. The attempt fails because it remains within political categories, paying little attention to the ways politically significant actions are grounded in religious motivations and take root in religious structures. An illustration of the simple accumulation of isolated cases and their unsatisfactory lumping into "types" is Martin 1978.
5. On this point, see Dodson 1980 and Levine and Wilde 1977.
6. For example, she repeats a series of allegations about Roger Vekemans and his associates with no consideration of the rebuttals that have been advanced, for example, in Weber 1978 or Vekemans 1979.
7. This link is particularly important for the long-range impact of developments such as "base communities"—relatively small, homogeneous, and egalitarian Catholic groups which have become increasingly popular in recent years. Their link to the institutional church provides legitimacy, moral and financial support, protection, and a degree of coherence by tying a multitude of otherwise disparate arenas together. See Bruneau 1980, and the references cited there.
8. A fine analysis of the complications of this process is Smith, forthcoming, especially chaps. 7 and 8.
9. Avineri (1968, chap. 5) shows that for Marx, praxis was both a particular kind of action and a means to the development of greater self-consciousness in individuals and social classes.
10. Segundo's analysis recalls Paulo Freire's comments on charity (1968, p. 29): "True



charity consists precisely in fighting to destroy the causes which nourish false charity. False charity constrains the fearful and subdued, the 'rejects' of life to extend their trembling hands. True generosity lies in striving so that these hands, whether of individuals or entire peoples, need be extended less and less in supplication, so that more and more they become human hands which work, and working, transform the world."

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