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## REVIEW ESSAYS

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### RELIGION AND POLITICS: Drawing Lines, Understanding Change

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*THE RELIGIOUS ROOTS OF REBELLION: CHRISTIANS IN THE CENTRAL AMERICAN REVOLUTIONS.* By PHILLIP BERRYMAN. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1984. Pp. 452. \$19.95.)

*ALLIANCE OR COMPLIANCE: IMPLICATIONS OF THE CHILEAN EXPERIENCE FOR THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN LATIN AMERICA.* By VIRGINIA BOUVIER. (Syracuse: Syracuse University, Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Foreign and Comparative Studies, 1983. Pp. 118. \$6.00.)

*LIBERATION THEOLOGY IN LATIN AMERICA, WITH SELECTED ESSAYS AND DOCUMENTS.* By JAMES V. SCHALL, S.J. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982. Pp. 402. \$10.95.)

*CRISTIANISMO Y SOCIEDAD.* (Published quarterly by Editorial Tierra Nueva, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.)

*SIC: REVISTA VENEZOLANA DE ORIENTACION.* (Published monthly by Centro Gumilla in Caracas.)

*SOLIDARIDAD: APORTES CRISTIANOS PARA LA LIBERACION.* (Published monthly in Bogotá.)

*TIERRA NUEVA: ESTUDIOS SOCIO-TEOLOGICOS EN AMERICA LATINA.* (Published quarterly by the Centro de Estudios para el Desarrollo e Integración de América Latina in Bogotá.)

It seems that scholarship follows the flag. When massive national interests (especially military and security interests) are engaged or threatened, the ensuing rush of public and official interest makes for "quick fixes" and a search for instant knowledge on hitherto ignored issues, groups, and areas. But quick fixes are at best unreliable, at worst prejudicial and misleading. Lagging far behind the pace of events and often far removed from the interests and motivations of real people and concrete institutions, instant scholarship runs the risk of serious distortion by ignoring the historical roots of current crises and by subordinating the real flow of events to categories drawn from broader strategic and ideological interests.

For North Americans, the study of religion and politics is a case in point. Events in U.S. society have converged with sharp conflict in the Third World to cast serious doubt on long-held assumptions about the link between modernization and secularization and the predominance of supposedly "rational" concerns in politics and policy-making. Events as disparate as the Jonestown massacre and the emergence of the Moral Majority, renewed debate over school prayer, and the general resurgence of religious issues in political discourse have together rekindled interest in the continuing links between religion and politics in the United States. In the Third World, developments in different regions and traditions converge, giving urgency to the search for guidance and knowledge. The shock of the Iranian Revolution and a new awareness of the continued political role of Islam have both been underscored by a growing realization of the emergent radicalism of the Latin American churches. Increased public attention paid to Latin American Catholicism has been fed by the publicity surrounding the 1979 Puebla Conference, the Pope's polemical visits to the region, and above all by the escalating crisis in Central America where religious themes and actors have played a notable role. The murder of four North American women missionaries in El Salvador in late 1980 may have been a surprise in the United States, but it was, after all, just one more link in a bloody and familiar chain of events for Central Americans.

The search for knowledge is also a struggle about knowledge and about action. At stake is the ability to define relevant and legitimate issues, to control the expression and action of key groups, and to structure the agenda of public and private debate. In the specific circumstances of Latin America that concern us here, conflict over religion and politics has been joined in a growing, public way since the landmark meeting of the region's Catholic bishops at Medellín in 1968. Since that time, the pendulum has swung widely. A broad initial tolerance for new ideas, experimentation, and the expression of theological and political radicalism in the churches yielded quickly to a reaction stressing

the reaffirmation of hierarchy, authority, and church unity while pulling the churches as institutions back from politically exposed and dangerous positions. Since the mid-1970s, conflict has sharpened, spurred above all by the growth, autonomy, and sociopolitical activism of grassroots Christian groups (*comunidades eclesiales de base*, or cebs) from Brazil and Chile to Central America.<sup>1</sup>

In the process, the locus of debate and the capacity for sustained action have moved beyond the formal limits of the ecclesiastical institution to rest, for the first time, with poor people in groups that they themselves take a major hand in running. Here, religious men and women have reworked the meaning of their faith in a context charged with concern for linking religious values to the issues and conflicts of everyday life. As a result, traditional religious symbols, messages, and celebrations have gradually taken on new meanings, spurring and underscoring a new understanding of social life and new commitments for dealing with it. Urgent and thorny questions arise: Is this the way the world must be? Will religion (symbols, leaders, liturgies) reinforce the existing order or will it lay the foundations for viewing change as both legitimate and possible? Is revolutionary violence legitimate in the Christian scheme of things? Can Catholic groups democratize internally and thus in the long run provide a basis of experience and commitment to democracy in the larger society, without running afoul of church and official elites who fear the loss of authority and control? In sum, can poor people—especially peasants—work through their religion to less fatalistic understandings of their situation, and in the process, can they use their religion to create structures and paths of action to promote change?

The urgency of questions like these in Central America and elsewhere spurs the search for reliable understanding while underscoring the complexities of the task. The “ideal” study must address ideological change while remaining sensitive to institutional continuities that shape and limit the impact of new ideas. Emergent groups must be recognized and set in the context of the changing structure and needs of the social classes on which they draw. Historical depth is required, with close attention to the way people make sense of their experiences and organize to deal with them. These rough guidelines are drawn from a tradition in the study of religion best exemplified in the work of Max Weber. Before turning to the books and journals under consideration here, a brief review of Weber’s central ideas may help clarify the intellectual issues and make sense of the process of change in Latin America today. Weber is best known for his analysis of the relation between the emergence of Protestantism (especially Calvinism and the Puritan sects) in Europe and the development of modern capitalism.

While this theme is indeed central to Weber's empirical work, the full significance of the relationship can only be grasped with careful attention to the way he framed the issues in the first place.

Max Weber's studies on religion work off a double premise that is both theoretical-methodological and empirical. In theoretical-methodological terms, Weber stresses the close, mutually reinforcing relation ("elective affinity") between ideas, institutional structures, organizational development, and the specific character of the social classes that take up the ideas and comprise the groups. Keeping ideas, institutions, routines, and carriers in dynamic balance is essential, in Weber's view, for placing any religious idea in context and making sense of its appeal.<sup>2</sup> In empirical terms, Weber was concerned above all with the emergence and diffusion of a "practical ethic," a system of moral rules giving structure and meaning to the experiences of daily life. He was sensitive to the special character of ethical religions (and of ethical conduct in general) that rests on the internalization of all-encompassing rules of moral choice. In his view, ethical religions are historically the successors to religions stressing magic and hence the manipulation of the world rather than the creation of orderly rules of choice of divine origin.

In the specific case of Protestantism, Weber argues that a key element giving force to new ideas was the development of congregational religion. A religion that is congregational is organized in small, self-managed groups of believers. This kind of structure gives new weight and dignity to the experiences and views of average members, who are enjoined to fuse religion with daily life through continuous, self-moved ethical practice in all areas of experience. Weber thought these aspects of Protestantism appealed particularly to the emerging bourgeoisie, whose work and home life already exemplified the totalizing orientation, rational organization, and independent self-management that the sects articulated as doctrine. Puritan ideas thus "fit" their situation well, giving religious meaning and sanction to the kind of social order toward which these new classes were groping.<sup>3</sup>

Congregational structures have a central role in Weber's analysis because they gave the Puritans a concrete basis for working out their ethical system in everyday experience. Moreover, a congregational form of organization underscored the equality of believers. All participated in the group, and further, all had equal access to religious knowledge through the translated Bible. All these developments undercut the traditional role of religious specialists—Puritans had little use for priests and disdained their authoritative status and magical role. These considerations are relevant to understanding change in Latin America today because some of the same elements that Weber uses to explain the impact of the Reformation are now visible in the region's Catholicism,

above all in the ideas of Liberation Theology and the development of base communities. Liberation Theology gives heavy weight to Biblical metaphors and to Bible study while firmly grounding religious significance in action and commitment in this world. The base communities nurture and reinforce these ideas by linking the themes of Bible study to daily experience and by stressing group solidarity, self-management, and autonomy.

These developments clearly parallel Weber's analysis, but they differ from it in two key respects. First and most obviously, these are changes *within* Catholicism. Attentive to the weight of structure and hierarchical authority in Catholic tradition, Weber largely dismissed the possibility of such change. He was both wrong and right. He erred by excluding the possibility of major transformations within Catholicism. But Weber was also correct, for his awareness of the limits on change posed by Catholic institutional traditions helps make sense of the current struggles within the Latin American churches. Here, as I noted earlier, recent years have witnessed a concerted counterattack on radical positions and grass-roots activism as part of a general effort to reassert hierarchy and reaffirm the unity of the Catholic church around bishops and clergy. The second difference lies in the carriers of change. Throughout Latin America today, peasants (with a smaller contingent of urban slumdweller) constitute the core of base communities, providing leaders and rank-and-file membership. To Weber, peasants were unlikely to be the source of religious innovation and were particularly unsuited to the demands of ethically oriented congregational religion. The rhythm of their life and work—at the mercy of the elements—predisposed peasants to magical explanations. At the same time, their physical isolation, economic weakness, illiteracy, and overall social subordination made them especially prone to domination by a stratum of official religious intermediaries.

What has changed in the situation of Latin American peasants that would explain why this group should now appear as a leading carrier of religious innovation? Weber offers a few hints. He notes that "in general, the peasantry will become a carrier of religion only when it is threatened by enslavement or proletarianization, either by domestic forces (financial or seignorial) or by some external political power" (1978a, 468). If one adds to this insight the likely impact on peasants of changes in religion that spur the development of congregational forms of practice, new light may be shed on the ways in which peasants (and other popular groups) are likely to understand and use their religion in the future.

Briefly, in the leading cases of Central America, peasants clearly are threatened and have in fact been proletarianized by the spread of large-scale export agriculture. The economic basis of traditional peasant

life is consequently undercut, and peasants are converted in large numbers into seasonal migrant laborers. This process is empowered by economic forces and state-organized repression throughout the region and is expressed in the combination of economic growth, popular impoverishment, and heightened violence. In such a context, religious innovation finds a ready audience.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, when such innovation advances concepts of justice, locates the promotion of justice in the very core of religious faith (citing the examples and teachings of Jesus and of the Old Testament prophets), and then places such ideas in the context of Bible study and the development of solidary, reinforcing group structures, the results are explosive both for politics and for the churches as institutions. The inevitability and legitimacy of the established order is undercut (or at the very least, questioned and understood in new ways), and in the process, peasants create a new set of understandings and a new framework for common action. Looking over the historical record, Weber put the matter bluntly, in terms that are relevant today: "the more a religion became congregational, the more did political circumstances contribute to the religious transfiguration of the ethics of the subjugated" (1978a, 591).

With Weber's ideas in mind, let me consider now the contributions at hand, beginning with the books by Berryman, Bouvier, and Schall. These works differ substantially in their empirical focus, ideological position, and in the quality and significance of their overall contribution. Before going into each book in detail, a brief general overview is in order. Phillip Berryman's study is clearly the best of the three. Marvelously rich in historical detail, Berryman's work is also challenging because of his willingness to confront squarely the ethical issues raised by the participation of grass-roots Christian groups in the Central American revolutions. The book is also a model of engaged scholarship, sympathetic and committed to "popular" groups and causes, yet sensitive to the requirements of valid and reliable knowledge. James Schall's work on Liberation Theology is engaged on the opposite side. Ideologically, Schall advances a conservative counterattack and uses the critique of Liberation Theology as a pretext for launching a more general assault on "progressive" and especially on socialist models and movements. His work is thus highly polemical and remains mostly on an abstract, theoretical level. Virginia Bouvier's monograph is less interesting and substantial than the works of either Berryman or Schall. She strives to explain changes in Latin American Catholicism through a crude model setting "conservative" institutional elites against "progressive" bases. From this point of view, leaders seek only survival and hence pursue accommodation with established powers; only base groups work towards "real" change. As we shall see, the crudeness of the model is not helped much by the weakness and derivative character of the data.



Let me begin more detailed comment with a look at Bouvier's *Alliance or Compliance: Implications of the Chilean Experience for the Catholic Church in Latin America*. This monograph is not a major contribution in theory, method, or data; hence it will not detain us long. The author tries to use the Chilean experience of the 1960s and 1970s as a paradigm for grasping the general process of change in the Latin American churches. She rests her analysis on a supposed gap in the interests of elites and masses. For Bouvier, these are in the last analysis class interests, transposed within the churches to hierarchy and base. This point of view is not helpful. In methodological terms, its crude class model ignores the role of shared institutional identities and commitments in joining levels and denies the close involvement of different levels in the churches. It is false and misleading to consider the involvement of priests and sisters in base-level work (especially in Chile) apart from the church's general commitment to penetrating and organizing popular sectors.

In theoretical terms, Bouvier leaves no room for changes in ideas or for their impact. In her pages, one finds no interplay of ideas and institutions. Indeed, there are hardly any people there at all, only groups and sectors interacting in a mechanical fashion to work out their class interests. This perspective reduces all change by the institution to a matter of tactical adjustment. But why not meet official repression (as in Brazil, Chile, or Central America) with accommodation alone? Surely this approach would be simpler and less costly than the oppositional stance so often assumed. At the same time, Bouvier's commitment to a neo-Marxist line of analysis pushes her into the trap of arguing that the only "systematic" political analysis is a Marxist one (p. 58). These are not helpful positions, and the situation is worsened by the weakness of the data. Bouvier is occasionally in error, but the real problem lies in the derivative character of the work. Thus for Chile, she relies on Smith (1982), while the more comparative sections draw heavily on Lernoux (1980). There is nothing wrong with these sources, but they are already available. There is no new contribution here.

Phillip Berryman's *The Religious Roots of Rebellion: Christians in the Central American Revolutions* is a world apart. It is difficult to do justice to this complex, challenging, and original work. The book grows out of the author's long involvement in Central America, which makes him all but unique among North American writers in his knowledge and understanding of grass-roots development. Indeed, the most striking virtue of this book is how alive it is. Chapters on Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua engage the reader fully with the hopes, fears, dilemmas, and developing insights and commitments of the people who make up the churches. At the same time, Berryman avoids a facile populism that sees only "the people" as wise, correct, and reliable. Populism of this

sort is a trap for the unwary because it ignores the many ways in which "the people" interact with established structures of power and expectation. Only by holding "the popular" and the institutional in close, constant relation can any reliable understanding of change emerge.

*The Religious Roots of Rebellion* is divided into three parts. The first three chapters set the stage well through brief, coherent accounts of the crisis in Central America and the simultaneous changes in the churches. The meaning of the word *popular* in current Latin American practice gets special attention, as Berryman explains how "popular religion," once a synonym for ignorance and ritualistic mass devotions, has evolved so that "popular" religious groups now offer a critical space and justification for new ideas and democratic practices in church and society alike. The promise of these early chapters is fulfilled in Part II, which explores religious and political change (and the changing links between them) in great detail for Nicaragua (Chapter 4), El Salvador (Chapter 5), and Guatemala (Chapter 6). The seventh chapter draws a brief set of parallels and contrasts among these experiences, while the last chapter in this section examines the new issues and conflicts of "Christians in Sandinist Nicaragua."

In each case examined, Berryman explains change through a mix of "internal" and "external" elements: new ideas, leaders, and commitments spawned by the experience of base communities (internal), given meaning and urgency by the "external" pressures and needs created in increasingly unjust and repressive societies. The experience of Archbishop Oscar Romero is a case in point, and it serves Berryman as a model of episcopal leadership in several related ways. First, Romero was a man whose conversion to increasingly radical political positions stemmed less from ideological conviction than from a traditional religious faith stirred by solidarity and contact with his people. Moreover, Romero was a leader who abandoned traditionally aloof hierarchical styles in order to interact closely with and learn from base-level clergy, religious, and average faithful. Finally, Romero was a teacher who by word and deed crystallized the ethical imperatives and clarified the choices implicit in the Salvadoran situation.

The chapters of Part III on issues in ethics, church practice, and theology are especially challenging. Here Berryman takes the teaching and example of Archbishop Romero as a basis for exploring a number of dilemmas central to recent experience. Among these, three stand out most sharply: first, ethical issues, especially the ethics of revolutionary violence and redistribution through revolutionary expropriation; second, ecclesiological issues, especially the growth of democratic practice within the church; and third, in the last chapter, a stimulating reconsideration of the bases for the church's overall role in the promotion of change. Here Berryman brings the threads of his analysis together to



lay a basis for legitimizing and implementing a committed stance by Christians and by the church in the revolutionary process. He draws especially on the work of theologian Jon Sobrino and on the words and actions of Archbishop Romero to argue for actions that uphold the "God of Life" and thus deny the "Idols of Death."

It seems to me that perhaps the most powerful element in the motivation of Christians in their struggle in Central America is a paschal sense of life: what Archbishop Romero meant when he said, "If they kill me I will rise in the Salvadoran people." This statement was not a "secularized" or a "purely horizontal" view of the resurrection; on the contrary, it came from one whose belief in final resurrection was utterly orthodox. But it expressed his view that the ultimate meaning of present struggle is revealed in the death/resurrection of Jesus. Romero was able to combine the most traditional view of "offering up" sacrifice with that of struggle. (P. 391)

Berryman's *Religious Roots of Rebellion* is a major contribution. Its unique historical depth and richness add substantially to our understanding of how popular religion can grow and change to become a central source and agent of change. His concern for linking economic and political issues to ethical and religious questions is a welcome antidote to more simplistic radical stances that often reduce popular religion to class alone. But as Berryman shows, the continuing power of traditional religious symbols and liturgies is very important to the Central American experience. His concluding reflections on democratization extend these insights and move the discussion beyond the common formulae in which the church "speaks for" the poor and serves as "voice for the voiceless" to consider what may happen when, in effect, the poor become the church. As Berryman recognizes, the issue is fraught with conflict and peril for popular groups, who often face attack from hostile governments and suspicious, fearful church authorities at one and the same time.

Berryman's general stance and the nature of his contribution stand out sharply when set against James Schall's *Liberation Theology in Latin America*. Schall's work, and that of the authors on whom he relies (such as Jeane Kirkpatrick and Michael Novak), is part of a broad conservative attack on the very ideas and developments that Berryman examines. Schall thus provides a useful example of conservative thinking, but at the same time his work is a step backward for it represents a return to apologetics as a mode of analysis and argument. Cutting through the analysis and commentary that Schall presents, one quickly arrives at three underlying concerns: first, a condemnation of Marxism as inaccurate, immoral, and oppressive; second, a lively defense of the church (as traditionally understood), stressing spirituality and hierarchy; and third, a set of economic and sociological propositions that together hold that the solution to Latin America's problems is not redis-

tribution (which is dismissed as a “socialist panacea” on p. 52) but rather, more capitalism.

The book is divided into three parts. Part I explores “Liberation Theology in America” and was written by Schall. Part II offers a group of “Critical Essays on Liberation Thought,” and Part III collects “Documents on Liberation Thought” ranging from papal speeches to scattered letters and statements by conservative authors. Schall’s contribution stresses the dangers inherent in Liberation Theology’s reliance on Marxism. He sees Marxism as morally repugnant and empirically wrong, and he argues that its categories of analysis obscure the reality of Latin America and fatally distort understanding of the process and possibilities of change (pp. 67, 103). As a better alternative, he offers a conservative sociology that views Latin America’s problems as ones of “imbalance” (p. 35) and looks to continued “modernization” to raise the general level of living. From this perspective, there are no real oppositions or structural conflicts between groups or classes, only strains and tensions to be eased with a fuller adjustment as time passes.

In sum, Schall sees Liberation Theology as a “contemporary ideology” that is deeply affected by “secular humanism” (pp. 22–23) and is laced with a misplaced sense of guilt. Hence he argues that the criticisms of Latin American societies so visible in Liberation Theology are really a denigration of Latin Americans and of their values—a case of blaming the victim. But this argument is absurd, as is the author’s ingenuous contention that while Liberation Theology is “ideological,” the position he and his colleagues promote and defend is simply realistic and pragmatic (p. 103).

The economic and political arguments that undergird Schall’s analysis are drawn principally from Michael Novak and Jeane Kirkpatrick, whose essays are reprinted in Part II. From Novak Schall draws the thesis that growth, equality, and democracy are best served in Latin America by more capitalism. Novak’s essay offers a convenient summary of his more general work (1982) and warrants separate comment here for its use of Weber’s insights on religious change, capitalism, and democracy to buttress an attack on Liberation Theology and on progressive Catholic groups in general.

According to Novak, because capitalism is historically the source of growth and equality, its rejection by Liberation Theology chokes off any real possibility of change. Moreover, because Novak identifies socialism with the imposition of bureaucratic-authoritarian states, he argues that only capitalism brings democracy (p. 287). In any case, he asserts (and Schall agrees) that there is no capitalism in Latin America: “What Latin Americans persist in calling ‘capitalism’ is, in Latin America, largely a form of syndicalism and corporatism which descends from the rights given by the Spanish or Portuguese crown to

certain large landholders or adventurers and constitutes virtual monopoly or state mercantilism" (p. 285). But Novak is wrong empirically and misleading theoretically. It is wrong empirically to suggest that Latin Americans have no experience with capitalism. Indeed, it is precisely the continued expansion of capitalism that itself has been associated with growing inequality and repressive state machines in the Central American cases that concern us here. Moreover, it is misleading theoretically and a distortion of Weber's central insights to assert a theoretical relationship *tout court*, without reference to specific historical conditions, institutions, and carriers. While Weber was doubtless correct about the link between the Puritan sects, capitalism, and democracy in Europe, he surely would have rejected the simple transfer of this relation to another culture and set of circumstances with no serious attempt to grasp the real nature of religious change, political organization, or of capitalism itself within this tradition.

While Schall's economics draw on Novak, his political theses rest largely on Jeane Kirkpatrick's well-known distinction between "authoritarian" (acceptable) and "totalitarian" (evil) regimes. Kirkpatrick's views serve Schall as a basis for rejecting any socialist or revolutionary project—or indeed, just about any kind of reform sponsored by public authorities. These efforts are seen as "a major cause of the plight of the poor," and as unrealistic, inefficient, and counterproductive measures that actually constitute naive first steps on the slippery slope to communism (p. 99).

I noted earlier the apologetic tone of *Liberation Theology in Latin America*. Schall takes a defensive stance throughout and is prepared to repel attacks on "the Church" from any quarter. He finds it especially alarming that the most visible dangers arise within the church itself, as Liberationists and popular groups advance the penetration of secular and Marxist notions. According to Schall, more control is needed, backed by a reaffirmation of traditional lines of hierarchical authority. Toward the end, Schall's guard slips, and it becomes clear that his real concern is "heresy": "More often than we care to realize, 'heresy' in the twentieth century has been a function of social analysis and political propositions" (p. 93).

The books by Bouvier, Berryman, and Schall together highlight a set of issues whose development over time can be followed in the pages of the four journals considered here: *Tierra Nueva*, *Solidaridad*, *SIC*, and *Cristianismo y Sociedad*. It is clearly difficult to review a journal the same way that one might review a book. My goal is more modest: I take these journals as a source of documentation and an index to the changing agenda of debate and conflict in the Latin American churches.

*Tierra Nueva*, a quarterly journal of "socio-theological studies," was founded in Colombia by Roger Vekemans and his research group.

Having left Chile after Allende's victory and settled in Bogotá, they founded *Tierra Nueva* and have been publishing it continuously since April 1972.<sup>5</sup> From the outset, this journal has served as a platform for articulating the concerns and positions of the core leadership of CELAM (Conferencia del Episcopado Latinoamericano), particularly those of Msgr. Alfonso López Trujillo, CELAM's longtime Secretary General and President.<sup>6</sup>

A glance through twelve years' issues of *Tierra Nueva* reveals a small set of related central themes, some of which have faded while others still persist. Two permanent concerns are the critique of Liberation Theology and the more general analysis of the church's relation to socialism and Marxism. In the early years, these issues are explored in general terms as well as through a series of critical and bibliographical articles on Chile that stressed the experience of the *Cristianos por el Socialismo* there. By 1978 Chile fades from view, and the direct attack on Liberation Theology yields center stage to three issues that together reflect the new concerns of church leaders: first, a developing critique of authoritarian rule through the analysis of national security doctrines; second, exploration of the possible impact of democratization within the church; and third, growing concern with pastoral issues, especially with respect to the significance of base communities. Analysis of these issues fits well with preparations for the 1979 Puebla meetings, which are themselves heavily documented.

Throughout this period, *Tierra Nueva's* early concern with sociological issues (reflected in its subtitle, *Estudios Socio-Teológicos en América Latina*) steadily dwindles, and more conventional religious and spiritual themes take its place. Attempts are made to clarify the intellectual and epistemological bases of new developments in liturgy and to grasp the cultural implications of religious change. Not surprisingly, there is much attention to Paolo Freire, and all of this serves to lay a foundation for steering new developments in popular religion into a safer, more orthodox course.

By 1982 and 1983, *Tierra Nueva* changes again. Documentation remained central to its offerings, but the focus now is on Central America, especially Nicaragua. Moreover, sensitive to the changing role of popular religious groups, *Tierra Nueva's* editors largely set aside the political and intellectual debates of earlier years to focus instead on understanding grass-roots change, while controlling its expression and setting its future agenda. The ideological critique of Liberation Theology is replaced by concern with evangelization, liturgy, and the analysis of popular religious practice. In all these respects, *Tierra Nueva* faithfully reflects the approach of CELAM and of the Vatican in Latin America today: downgrade sociological analysis, rein in political com-

mitment, rejuvenate church structures stressing hierarchical authority and unity, and accentuate the spiritual.

*Solidaridad* is also published in Colombia<sup>7</sup> (monthly or ten times a year since March 1979), but this journal advances a distinctly radical and popular line. Each issue mixes theological and pastoral articles with current social and political commentary. Articles are often highly polemical, with photos and cartoons filling out each issue. *Solidaridad* is put out by a small group of lay people, with the help of some clergy and religious individuals. Because its authors and editors fear official and ecclesiastical repression, all articles are anonymous.<sup>8</sup>

Throughout its short life, *Solidaridad* has focused on a group of related themes. The publication and analysis of church documents (from Colombia and elsewhere in Latin America) has been matched by consistent attention to promoting the role of Christians in the "popular movement." Marxist categories of analysis are stressed in an attempt to develop a critique of Colombian society and politics that will explain injustice and inequality in sociological terms linking these analyses to religious ideas advanced in articles on theology, ecclesiology, liturgy, and similar topics. Popular organization is important for *Solidaridad*. Articles therefore stress concrete issues like education, agrarian reform, and unionization. These publication efforts are matched by the efforts of the group surrounding *Solidaridad* to serve as informal coordinators of a net of "progressive" base communities that find little welcome in the official structures of Colombia's Catholic Church.

A parallel, but more solid and successful, effort is *SIC*, which also appears monthly (ten times a year) in Venezuela.<sup>9</sup> *SIC* is the oldest of the four journals considered here; it has been published continuously since January 1938 by Venezuela's Jesuits. The Jesuit link gives *SIC* a financial and organizational stability denied to *Solidaridad*. This link also allows *SIC* to serve as a window on the many changes that Jesuits in Venezuela (as elsewhere) have undergone in the past forty years. Once the secure, stalwart supporters of the established order and the administrators of its institutions, Jesuits are now widely involved in the promotion of popular organizations and political change all over Latin America. The current orientation of *SIC* dates from the early 1970s, when as a result of struggles within the Jesuit community, the journal came into the hands of the Centro Gumilla, then as now controlled by an energetic, progressive group dedicated to research, writing, and popular organization.

The change has been dramatic. As late as 1967, *SIC* was still a very traditional Catholic journal of opinion, stressing intrachurch issues with only limited (and largely defensive) social and political commentary. But now a typical issue presents informed and acute analysis of

national affairs, with extensive and accurate documentation. Economic and political issues receive special attention, along with analysis of theological and church questions. Areas of concern to popular groups are covered in depth, with articles on cooperatives, the judicial system, health care organizations, and the like. Through the Centro Gumilla, *SIC* is also linked to a network of grass-roots organizations in peasant hamlets and urban barrios around the country, and *SIC* has turned out an impressive set of pamphlets, short courses, and effective advocacy programs.<sup>10</sup> The editors of *SIC* balance this concern for economic, social, and political matters with consistent attention to religious and church-related issues, particularly as these issues translate into popular understandings and into the agenda of popular groups. In this area, *SIC* is less self-consciously "churchy" than *Tierra Nueva*, but notably more balanced and realistic than *Solidaridad*. Thus a typical piece in *SIC* stresses the need for genuine autonomy and combines attention to the class character of popular groups with respect for their culture and belief systems (e.g., Trigo 1982, 1984).

The last journal under review here is *Cristianismo y Sociedad*, which is published quarterly in the Dominican Republic by ISAL (Iglesia y Sociedad en América Latina), the organization of progressive Protestant churches in Latin America.<sup>11</sup> Like its counterparts, *Cristianismo y Sociedad* has shifted notably in content and focus over the years, and attention to these changes can provide useful insight into the evolving agenda of more radical Protestant groups in the region.<sup>12</sup>

Two themes have motivated the writers of *Cristianismo y Sociedad* over the years: the promotion of ecumenicism and the commitment to identifying with the poor and advancing the practice of justice. The treatment of each of these themes has changed notably over time, reflecting an increasingly radical stress on grass-roots organization and popular action. Ecumenicism thus shifts away from issues of doctrine and interchurch relations to focus instead on building ecumenical ties through common service to the poor, through joining and struggling with them (Vidales 1982). At the same time, the social and political thrust of such grass-roots struggle itself has changed, in ways that fit well with the general evolution of the issues in Latin America.

In the first few years of *Cristianismo y Sociedad*, many articles explored "development and modernization" themes, in an attempt to identify the specific character of Latin American society and to deduce tasks and imperatives for action from it. But these concerns quickly yielded to a broader interest in liberation, with particular concern for issues of inequality, injustice, violence, and revolution. Marxist categories soon dominated analysis, and theological discourse stressed the reworking of traditional categories like resurrection, exodus, and poverty in more directly political and revolutionary terms. By the early



1980s, the transformation was complete, and the typical issue of *Cristianismo y Sociedad* is now concerned with political and ecclesiological issues, stressing grass-roots organization, class solidarity, democratization, and a close, mutually reinforcing link between religious faith and revolutionary struggle.

All these themes have a familiar ring by now, suggesting that Liberation Theology *as a system of ideas* may be played out. There is little new in the realm of ideas; perhaps, therefore, the future path of change (and by extension, the most fruitful line of future study) lies less with ideas than with their expression in the daily practice of popular Christian groups. Here, Liberation Theology is not so much a matter of ideas and intellectual debate but rather serves to articulate a group of broad, legitimating assumptions in whose shadow popular groups rework traditional symbols and liturgies while creating new and meaningful spaces for action. Berryman captures this process very well and shows how popular piety and religious practice express popular hopes, providing a setting for mutual solidarity and confirmation of personal beliefs even in the midst of oppression, violence, and personal tragedy.

Many Christians were being killed, and their death was widely regarded as martyrdom—following the death of Jesus the Great Witness (Martyr), and this closeness to martyrdom tended to give a sense of ultimacy to people's actions and options. In my observations, a paschal sense of life is at the center of the religious view of the "popular Church" in Central America. One revealing indicator is that the main liturgical celebrations have often been funerals for those who have "fallen" (usually not in armed combat). On these occasions, there is a sense of shared community, commitment, risk, and joy, and a certitude that this death is not in vain. (P. 392)

These reflections suggest that future understandings of religion, the churches, and politics in Latin America are best pursued not through ideological polemic, class analysis, or attention to institutional matters alone, but rather in the developing interplay of these planes of action and meaning with the new structures being created at the grass roots. It is here that we can trace the growth of a new practical ethic and grasp the depth and solidity of its expression in organization and action. In the works reviewed here, this relation is best understood by Berryman, by the writers of *SIC*, and in a critical way by the staff of *Tierra Nueva*, all of whom share with Max Weber an appreciation of how religions grow through their participation in the central experiences of everyday life.

#### NOTES

1. Much has been written on this process. For a good discussion of Puebla, see Berryman (1980); relevant sources and trends are explored in Levine (1981a and 1981b). The literature on base communities is still mostly abstract and theoretical; for a consideration of recent theory and practice, see Levine (1984).

2. Throughout his work, Weber stressed the complexity of these relationships and the need to make any discussion historically specific: "religion nowhere creates certain economic conditions unless there are also present in the existing relationships and constellations of interests certain possibilities of, or even powerful drives toward, such an economic transformation. It is not possible to enunciate any general formula that will summarize the comparative substantive powers of the various factors involved in such a transformation or will summarize the manner of their accommodation to one another" (1978a, 577).
3. For example, Weber stresses the degree to which a pattern of economic life involving long-term commitments gave meaning to a phrase like "honesty is the best policy" and reinforced a general predisposition to believe in ethical compensation (1978a, 481-89). He explores links to democracy as part of his general considerations on "Political and Hierocratic Domination." See Weber (1978b, Chapter 15, especially Section 14, "Sect, Church, and Democracy," pp. 1204-11).
4. For a useful introduction to the analysis of economic and political change in Central America, see Baloyra (1983) and Durham (1979). In economic and political terms, as well as in the uses and transformations of religion, Central America presents many parallels to the experience of Southeast Asia, especially Vietnam. For relevant studies, see Popkin (1979) (especially chaps. 3-5) and Tai (1983).
5. The address for *Tierra Nueva* is Apartado Aereo 100572, Bogotá, D.E. 10, Colombia.
6. López Trujillo was a founding member of the journal's editorial board, as was Msgr. Darío Castellón, another Colombian bishop recently elected to head CELAM. Monsignor Castellón remains on *Tierra Nueva's* board, joined by Msgr. Mario Revello, who recently served as President of the Colombian Conference of Bishops.
7. The address for *Solidaridad* is Apartado Aereo 3026, Bogotá, D.E., Colombia.
8. The group around *Solidaridad* is the latest manifestation of a long and distinguished radical line in Colombian Catholicism, beginning with Camilo Torres and the Golconda group and most recently embodied in SAL (Sacerdotes para America Latina), which was active into the mid-1970s.
9. The address for *SIC* is Apartado 40.225, Caracas 1040A, Venezuela.
10. Centro Gumilla has two operating groups, one in Caracas that publishes *SIC* and engages in other activities of research, writing, and reflection, and a second in Barquisimeto that has been central to the development of urban and rural cooperatives of all kinds throughout the western part of Venezuela.
11. The address for *Cristianismo y Sociedad* is García Godoy No. 8 (Altos), Apartado de Correos 464-2 (Centro de los Heroes), Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.
12. The activities of more conservative evangelical Protestant groups (especially in Central America) are reviewed in Domínguez and Huntington (1984).

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