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TOWARDS A THEOLOGY OF REVOLUTION:

AN INVESTIGATION OF  
HISTORICAL AND ECUMENICAL  
RESOURCES.

By

Barry P. Whittaker

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies through  
the Department of Theology in partial fulfilment of  
the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts at  
The University of Windsor,  
Windsor, Ontario.  
1970

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## ABSTRACT

The author's first concern is to establish both the need and the validity of a theology of revolution, against the objections which are enumerated. It was Teilhard de Chardin who re-integrated the human phenomenon, including human subjectivity, with the universe under scientific enquiry. Without this reconciliation, acknowledging the empirical significance of subjectivity and the validity of an interpretive purpose to objective events, any responsibility towards the world, revolutionary or otherwise, would be illusory. Then follows an historical survey of the Christian radical tradition.

While there is a continuity in the history of Christian dissent, there is also discernible a consistent tendency of the Christian community to conform to its environment. The emphasis on private and personal religious experience, from the era of the Enlightenment, has had a two-fold consequence. It has divorced private faith from public action, and has reinforced the conformist tendency. The novelty of a theology of revolution lies in its contrast to this tradition of conservatism; it is not new when seen in relation to the continuous challenge by Christianity to the "rulers of the darkness of this world" (Eph. 6.12; K.J.V.), exemplified by Jesus himself.

The question is raised, "Is involvement with violence permissible for a follower of Jesus?" and the answer given here is affirmative. Jesus was not non-violent; in his ministry there is both a reckoning with conflict, together with an eschatological assurance

of the end of conflict.

However, eschatology is not an excuse for equivocation. The Church has traditionally allowed for a legitimate use of force, and in the present situation is allowed no neutrality on the question. Either Christian silence sanctions systemic and repressive violence, or theologians come to recognize violent revolution as in some instances a potentially redemptive solution.

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The students of the Theological Faculty of Huron College, University of Western Ontario, also have earned my appreciation. Their mixed reception of the ideas expressed in the penultimate chapter, during a "Dean's Hour", convinced me of the need for a theological evaluation of violence!

Since I have been working at some distance from the facilities of the University of Windsor, it seems only fitting that I should acknowledge my indebtedness to the libraries and librarians of Huron College, St. Peter's Seminary, and the Divine Word Centre, London.

B.P.W.



## INTRODUCTION

I have attempted, in this paper, to assemble materials for a coherent theological evaluation of the phenomenon of revolution. My main difficulty was in limiting the discussion surrounding this vital subject, when new and relevant theological material was coming off the presses, almost daily it seemed! There will be side issues to this presentation which I have not fully explored, but none I hope that will significantly affect its main conclusions.

In spite of the attention of Christian writers and Church councils to the subject of revolution, much of it documented here, the present climate of thought in either politics or theology is hardly receptive to the mutual infringement demanded by a theology of revolution. For this reason, I have examined the conservative and existentialist sources of the opposition from the side of theology, and I have also used the work of Hannah Arendt as my norm for a secular, political understanding of revolution. My consistent disagreement with Miss Arendt is not due to lack of respect for her scholarship. However, I do question what appears to be her rigid secularism, a predisposition to reject theological categories from political consideration, just as I challenge a transcendentalism in theology that would prefer to be immune to secular comparisons and judgements.

The Western Christian mind (Catholic and Protestant) has a

basic antipathy towards revolution which is rarely examined. What I have tried to suggest in this thesis is that such an examination is long overdue and that it will reveal Christian historical roots to the contemporary secular phenomenon even in its most anti-Christian expression. The Church's failure to recognize or examine its own pattern of accommodation to the dominant power has been a factor in the emergence of secular revolution detached from Christian revolutionary motivation. I am urging a recognition by Christianity of its own children, its own revolutionary consequences (see p. 89), a recognition that could save revolution from its pattern of violent self-destruction, and would do much to deliver Christianity from the tragic but popular misinterpretation of its faith as human impotence.

I

WITHOUT A THEOLOGY OF REVOLUTION

"In the beginning of every cultural change and of every political  
revolution - God!"

Canon Max Warren, Anglican Congress,  
Toronto, 1963.

"Civilized man stands today in dire danger, for he is on the verge of a precipice over which he may plunge into ruin from which there might be no recovery." Thus the late Archbishop of York, Dr. Cyril Garbett wrote in 1952. In an Age of Revolution is significant both for its serene assurance of the Church's answer to world crisis and also, in so short a time, for its distance and dissimilarity from present-day Christian attempts to deal with a revolutionary situation. "The Scriptures" says the Archbishop, "have become alive to us in a way they could not have been to those who assumed that the ages of revolution were long past."<sup>1</sup> There is no attempt, however, at a Scriptural exegesis that would enlighten our era from the insights of the Biblical writers, themselves involved in the experiences of national and international crises. The book contains a restatement of traditional theology for individual comfort in unsettled times. To those who are perplexed, there is the reassurance of the Fatherhood of God,<sup>2</sup> the value of the individual<sup>3</sup> and the vision of an alternative to present distress: "Now, however, when the future of this world seems so uncertain, and that it is possible all human achievement may soon be destroyed, it is only the Christian belief in a life after death

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<sup>1</sup> In an Age of Revolution, C.E. Garbett, (London, 1952) p. 225.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 229

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 231

which can deliver man from a sense of futility."<sup>4</sup> This could so easily be parodied as "Kantian postulates for a non-revolutionary morality" - except that such a treatment would do less than justice to the serious attempt by a Christian apologist to go at least as far in meeting the "age of revolution" as anyone in the churches of two decades ago. It remains, however, a statement of theology within a revolutionary situation, seeming to offer an oasis of tranquility beside the still waters of truth, rather than a theology to or for a world wracked by revolutions.

Something more is needed, and it was Harvey Cox who was perhaps the first to point to it. "We are living in an age of revolution without a theology of revolution. The development of such a theology should be the first item on the theological agenda of today."<sup>5</sup> The discernment of this need comes almost as a surprise in its context of affirmation of the secular city. It doesn't seem immediately consistent on the one hand to embrace the values of present-day secularism and on the other to foster the spirit of dissent. In doing so, however, Cox provides us with the first glimpse of a paradox that will pursue our enquiries. It is elaborated by Brian Wicker, of the English

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<sup>4</sup> In an Age of Revolution, C.E. Garbett, (London, 1952), op. cit., p. 233.

<sup>5</sup> The Secular City, Harvey Cox, (New York, 1965), p. 107. Since the book his convictions have not changed. According to Steve Weissman's article "The New Left Man Meets the Dead God", referring to Cox, "He uses the word 'revolution' so much that one would think it was going out of style." New Theology No. 5, eds. Martin E. and Dean G. Peerman, (New York, 1968), p. 26.

Catholic "Slant" group: "What is needed is a distinction between positive recognition of the secular world as the one stage on which the Christian life is to be lived, and accommodation to the secular world just as it is".<sup>6</sup> Previously in the same article he writes: "There is no such thing as simply being committed to the modern world, instead of retreating from it as in the past. To be committed in one direction may - and usually will - mean refusing a commitment in another direction."<sup>7</sup> Exploring the doctrinal, historic and contemporary tensions between the two emphases of accommodation and refusal to accommodate will provide much of the ensuing discussion.

Since theology is a reflection by faith on experience, a fulfillment of the theological need indicated by Cox must be preceded by the churches' evaluation of their revolutionary experience, in which they are not only participants but even arraigned as the accused by a revolutionary tribunal. "We are not threatening the churches. We are saying that we know the churches came with the military might of the colonizers. Hence, if the churches in colonial territories were established by military might, we know deep within our hearts that we must be prepared to use force to get our demands. We are not saying that this is the road we want to take. It is not, but let us be very clear that we are not opposed to violence. We were captured in Africa by violence. We were kept in bondage and political servitude and

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<sup>6</sup> "Eschatology and Politics", eds. T. Eagleton and B. Wicker, From Culture to Revolution, (London, 1968) p. 262. Emphases mine.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 262.

forced to work as slaves by the military machinery and the Christian Church working hand in hand."<sup>8</sup> The flood waters are lapping at the sanctuary steps and the churches are being forced into some kind of response. The best kind will be that provided by faithful and disciplined reflection, even if time does not permit the leisure for extensive scholarship. Swift ad hoc adjustments by Christian communities have been made to meet the pressure, such as the guidelines issued by the General Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of the United States.<sup>9</sup> Without such direction, individual Christian responses to revolution will vary all the way from guilt-ridden emotional submission to social and economic aggression. Given the fact and experience of a revolutionary world situation, it is surely inappropriate to delay in establishing a pattern of reflection which will be both informed (and judged) by the theological insights of Christian tradition, and at the same time effective in forming a "Christian style of life" - to borrow a phrase from Jacques Ellul - relevant to this situation. It isn't enough to agree with Cox that rightly understood, the Bible is a revolutionary document. "Before a theology of revolution begins to emerge, there must be a dialectical relationship between theology and revolution. . . . This results not in [I would say not only in] a theological evaluation of revolution, but in a revolutionizing of

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<sup>8</sup> The Black Manifesto, April 26, 1969, (Detroit, U.S.A.)

<sup>9</sup> Message of the General Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). St. Louis, Missouri, May 29, 1969. Congregations were instructed, for example, not to call the police when worship was interrupted by protesters.

theology."<sup>10</sup> Fr. Schillebeeckx has expressed caution: "I am personally wary of the concept of a 'theology of revolution'. I am more inclined. . . to investigate the ethical implications of an active Christian participation in a revolution which a past history offering no human salvation has made inevitable."<sup>11</sup> But is it possible to make an ethical choice that does not itself refer to a framework of belief and understanding - a theology - concerning revolution? Beyond the matter of mere participation,<sup>12</sup> what of the possibility of Christians initiating revolution?

Concerning civil disobedience, a recent writer has said, "A fully human action must involve understanding as well as doing. It might be hoped that a commitment informed by rigorous thought would be better able to consider its own consequences, would take into account a wider range of reality, would be more fully shareable by a community of commitment, would have more clearly defined purposes and would achieve more durable results than would a commitment without reflection."<sup>13</sup> This same argument can, in my view, be urged for a theology of revolution

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<sup>10</sup> Alistair Kee, New Christian (London, May, 1969). A review of Cox's God's Revolution and Man's Responsibility.

<sup>11</sup> E. Schillebeeckx, O.P., God The Future of Man (New York, 1968) p.198.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Castro's judicious reply when asked about the role of the Catholic Church during the revolution: "The Catholics of Cuba have lent their most decided co-operation to the cause of liberty." Quoted by Leslie Dewart in Christianity and Revolution, (New York, 1963) p. 115.

<sup>13</sup> C.B. Stevick, Civil Disobedience and the Christian (New York, 1969) p. 6.



Immediate reactions to such a project can be anticipated, first as surprise, then as opposition. Surely, by "revolution" is meant "reformation" - a spiritual aggiornamento? Are not theology and revolution antithetical terms? How can there ever be a Christian justification for revolutionary violence? Bishop Otto Dibelius spoke for many when he exclaimed, "May God preserve us from a 'theology of revolution' as advocated at Geneva."<sup>14</sup> During the twentieth century, the clearance sale of the Church's spiritual life has gone so far that this final suggestion is really not necessary."<sup>15</sup> However, as so often in the past, it is precisely the arguments in opposition, expressed along the following lines, which indicate the shape of an emerging theology.

i. Revolution is a contemporary phenomenon.<sup>16</sup> It is too early for a theological evaluation, much less for any "theology" that can only be a thinly disguised attempt to board the secular "band wagon". As Ernst Benz points out, the political connotations of the term "revolution" are quite different from its astronomical usage. "The term revolution did not get its modern meaning of the violent political overthrow of the existing order of state and society until the French Revolution. As late as the seventeenth century, it had exactly the

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<sup>14</sup> A reference to the World Conference on Church and Society, Geneva, 1966.

<sup>15</sup> Quoted by J.M. Lochman in "Ecumenical Theology of Revolution", Scottish Journal of Theology, XXI, 2 (June, 1968); Also, New Theology No. 6, p. 122.

<sup>16</sup> "Historically, wars are among the oldest phenomena of the recorded past, while revolutions, properly speaking, did not exist prior to the modern age." Hannah Arendt, On Revolution (New York, 1963) p. 2.

opposite connotation of overthrow, namely, the orderly circulating of the stars, particularly the revolution - revolutio - of the planets around the sun. The term received its modern meaning by a gradual change of its original significance resulting from astrology and a combination of the movements of the stars with Aristotle's doctrine of the State. This doctrine suggested that there was a cyclical sequence of forms of government, from democracy to tyranny, and that the changes were effected by political struggles. These changes in the forms of government, which were mostly brought about by force, were related to certain constellations in their movement, that is - revolution."<sup>17</sup> Hannah Arendt agrees, and identifies the moment of transition from one usage to the other. On the night of July 14, 1789, when Louis XVI heard of the fall of the Bastille, he exclaimed "C'est une révolte!" The reply of the Duc de La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt was, "Non, Sire, c'est une révolution." "Here we hear the word still, and politically for the last time, in the sense of the old metaphor which carries its meaning from the skies down to the earth; but here for the first time perhaps, the emphasis has entirely shifted from the lawfulness of a rotating, cyclical movement to its irresistibility... What had happened there was irrevocable and beyond the power of a king."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Evolution and Christian Hope (New York, 1966) p. 64.

<sup>18</sup> H. Arendt, On Revolution (New York, 1963) p. 41.

However, the experience of a situation which presents a challenge to recognized authority, which threatens to effect a significant transfer of power within the political unit and which derives its momentum from a popular support aroused by a few articulate visionaries, is not new in the history of the church. As I shall indicate<sup>19</sup> in further discussion on this point, whatever we call them, revolutionary movements have occurred before the modern era. We shall observe the degree of Christian motivation and involvement in them which has been virtually ignored by theologians of the main traditions.

If the problem of revolution is modern at all, it is modern in intensity. "Revolutionary thought and action, the basic rejection of the present world system of power and order, and the determination to overthrow it, are more alive in our world than in that of a generation ago." The World Council of Churches' Conference on Church and Society recognized the situation, and then went on to adumbrate a theological response: "The relation between nationalism, world history, and the history of God's judgement and redemption is posed anew as a problem in this context."<sup>20</sup> Any further delay in effective interpretation will invite a consequence analagous to R. Niebuhr's analysis of the positivistic dismissal of moral categories as unintelligible or irrational: "This is not to eliminate it (the moral life) from existence, but to leave it subject to unregulated passion."<sup>21</sup> Revolution will not be eliminated, either by being theologically ignored or condemned,

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<sup>19</sup> See below, p. 47.

<sup>20</sup> World Conference on Church and Society. Official Report. (Geneva, 1967) p. 199. Hereafter referred to as WCCS.

<sup>21</sup> The Meaning of Revelation. (New York, 1960) p. 107.

and already it is feared as a force beyond the control or understanding of man.<sup>22</sup>

ii. Political revolution pertains to man's historical and external environment: therefore it is outside the scope of theological enquiry. There can no more be a theology of revolution than there can be a theology of automobile hub-caps.<sup>23</sup>

The philosophical tension that underlies this opposition to theology's extra-territorial ambitions comes to us from the Enlightenment. Ever since Descartes' "faux pas",<sup>24</sup> many Christian writers have accepted the distinction between subjectivity - as the proper sphere for ethical and religious assertions - and objectivity - the realm of factual observation and scientific enquiry. Whatever its usefulness in freeing scientific disciplines from spiritual hypotheses, the same distinction has certainly emphasized the difficulties of those who expect to see subject-matter for theology in the events of secular history.

According to Jürgen Moltmann, both Barth and Bultmann made their respective concessions to the thought system by which they were dominated; Barth by emphasizing the transcendent subjectivity of God,

<sup>22</sup> "...this association of a mighty undercurrent sweeping men with it, first to the surface of glorious deeds, and then down to peril and infamy..." H. Arendt, op. cit., p. 43.

<sup>23</sup> "A faith that is so unhistorical is not likely to feel itself threatened." J.B. Metz, Theology of the World, (New York, 1969) p.13.

<sup>24</sup> So designated by Archbishop William Temple in Nature, Man and God, Gifford Lectures, 1932-1934, Lecture III. (London, 1934)

and Bultmann by taking the transcendent subjectivity of man as the locus and content of revelation. Both left the "objective" world neutral to faith. To the closed system of cause and effect, "God and his action remain hidden in principle".<sup>25</sup> This leaves the Christian under a double disadvantage. At the least, external and secular history has no need of the God-hypothesis; at the worst, the "world" becomes a liability to faith, as that in which man works, calculates and dominates, and by which he finds justification. "For the subject in search of himself, 'world' and 'God' thereby become radical alternatives."<sup>26</sup>

Therefore, a violent action by a group of men to overthrow a particular form of government can either be regarded as a political event to which theology qua theology is indifferent; or, because it represents an expression of man's fallen nature in self-assertion, it can only be judged negatively.<sup>27</sup> This brings us to the third line of opposition.

<sup>25</sup> A Theology of Hope (London, 1967) p. 64.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. WCCS, p. 23. "Prof. H.D. Wendland spoke on 'Church and Revolution'. He said that the technical democratic world in which we live was a product of the revolutions of England, France, Russia and China, and that this fact should have stirred Christian thinking into ever-new enquiry into the reasons for these great revolutions and their effects. He said it was remarkable this did not happen. Moreover, the Christian discussion of revolution, especially since the French Revolution, has been predominantly negative, reflecting the powerful tradition of a conservative Christian mentality." The omission of the American Revolution from Prof. Wendland's list is significant, and will be discussed later.

iii. Revolution is in principle and in historical fact antagonistic to Christian faith. Two characteristics of revolution make it particularly susceptible to Christian condemnation: it is against authority and it is violent.

Even so recent and respected a theologian as Dietrich Bonhoeffer echoed the traditional suspicion of revolution: "According to Holy Scripture, there is no such thing as a right to revolution."<sup>28</sup> It is less surprising, then, to find a Homily Against Disobedience and Willful Rebellion issued in England in 1562.<sup>29</sup> A precedent for them both is the example of Martin Luther.

Although Garaudy, the French Marxist, dismisses the Constantinian tradition - "an ideology of imperial justification and resignation"<sup>30</sup> - it has had a long life and a weighty influence on Christian thought.

Stevick cites the Biblical material enjoining respect for authority. "Christians are to be 'subject for the Lord's sake to

<sup>28</sup> Ethik. (Munich, 1953) Vol. 2, p. 273. And yet even he died as a revolutionary. "In the end a Dietrich Bonhoeffer turns violent and plots the death of a Hitler. In the end, a Father Camilo Torres takes to the hills and dies with the guerrillas." Martin E. Marty, The Search For a Usable Future. (New York, 1969), p. 116.

<sup>29</sup> "The argument of this address... designates rebellion as 'both the first and the greatest and the very root of all sins'... The sermon assembles all possible arguments on behalf of obedience and allows for no alternative. 'Let us... avoid and flee all rebellion as the greatest of all mischiefs'." D.B. Stevick, op. cit., p. 56.

<sup>30</sup> R. Garaudy, From Anathema to Dialogue (London, 1967) p. 56.

every human institution', (1 Peter 2.13); they are to pay taxes, (Romans 13, 1-2); to honour the Emperor, (1 Peter 2, 17); and to live peaceably with all, (Romans 12, 18). This is hardly a program for insurrectionists."<sup>31</sup> Both Luther and Calvin had a horror of anarchy, and both taught a passive obedience to civil authority. In England kings from Henry VIII to Charles I claimed Scriptural warrant for their royal prerogatives as well as for their subjects' loyalty. Perhaps it has been as an "overflow" from this dominant Christian tradition in the West, that even revolutionaries have felt obliged to claim some ultimate source for their authority in order to claim obedience.<sup>32</sup> "We can hardly avoid the paradoxical fact that it was precisely the revolutions, their crisis and their emergency, which drove the very 'enlightened' men of the eighteenth century to plead for some religious sanction at the very moment when they were about to emancipate the secular realm fully from the influence of the churches and to separate politics and religion once and for all."<sup>33</sup>

When we take note of this paradox, however, our terms of reference in a discussion of Christianity and political authority are immediately widened. Monarchs and rebels invoke religion to support their respective systems - and any religion will do. This reliance of

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<sup>31</sup> Op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>32</sup> "In terms of the French Revolution, he (Robespierre) needed an ever present transcendent source of authority that could not be identified with the general will of either the nation or the Revolution itself, so that an absolute sovereignty... might bestow sovereignty on the nation." H. Arendt, op. cit., p. 185.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 186.

order on religion is so consistent that Fr. Girardi has observed a deep and essential conflict between the concepts of religion and revolution.<sup>34</sup> The ideas and vocabularies are strikingly different as the two concepts are compared in various aspects. In actual historical ideals, the revolutionary concept presents a program that is democratic, possible, a future that is earthly. Religion is either implicitly or explicitly subordinational,<sup>35</sup> and speaks of a future in eternity. In revolution, man is summoned to creative initiative and planning, whereas in religion man is called to conform to God's will. The revolutionary image of the world, which is dynamic and innovative, is in conflict with the religious image, which is inclined to be static, a system of natural laws reflecting the Platonic "real" world. These differences naturally have an outcome in different interpretations of history. The materialism of the revolutionary leads him to see political and economic structures as the source of "evil", while the religious and spiritual interpretation concentrates on the individual and his moral struggles.

While all this evidence underscores the resistance to a "theology of revolution", it also draws attention to the need for a "revolutionized theology"<sup>36</sup> to come first, or for the image of religion to be "demythologized"<sup>37</sup> by revolutionary fact and thought.

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<sup>34</sup> G. Girardi, S.D.B., "The Philosophy of Revolution and Atheism", Faith and the World of Politics, Concilium XXXVI, pp. 110-122.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. The Encyclical Mystici Corporis Christi, Pius XII, p. 17.

<sup>36</sup> As Kee prescribes, see above p. 6.

<sup>37</sup> G. Girardi, loc. cit., p. 122.



Such a religion as Fr. Girardi has analysed may prove, and may often have proved, an easy ally in the age-long need to divinize the political process, but it is not the religion informed by biblical insight. As Cox points out "Political change depends on a previous desacralization of politics"<sup>38</sup> and the religion of the Bible does exactly that. "The first Christians were willing to pray for the Emperor, but not to burn incense on his altar. The difference between the two is crucial."<sup>39</sup> The conviction of the Apostles that "we must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5. 29) at the very least indicates some difference from a religio-political stance that interprets disobedience as apostasy; at the most, given a sufficiently regressive and repressive system, it does indeed provide a program for insurrectionists - whether against a Rehoboam or a Syngman Rhee.

But we still have outstanding the doubts of a Christian conscience informed by the teachings and example of Jesus. "Revolution in the modern world means violence, and violence means killing. It means that someone else is de trop for me and my party. We cannot co-exist in the same world. I must vanquish him and kill him."<sup>40</sup> Martin Marty's recent book, The Search for a Usable Future, of which this is a quotation, is ambivalent on the question of violence, just as it is about almost every other issue vexing the churches, because

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<sup>38</sup> Secular City, p. 25.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>40</sup> The Search for a Usable Future. (New York, 1969) p. 111.

it reflects the tension that I mentioned previously: between accommodation and the refusal to accommodate. Even under the leadership of its most secular thinkers, the Christian community has not yet sprung the trap by which it is held, and by which its initiative is crippled. One jaw of the trap is the identification of "to accept" with "to accommodate"; the other jaw is the identification of "to love" with "not to hurt". As a result, Marty's formula is "revolutionary action. . . as a last resort".<sup>41</sup> And yet, even this cautious advice can be denounced as biased. "The poor are exhorted to shun violence, not because it is futile, dangerous or inopportune, but because it is unchristian. Probably for the first time in about seventeen centuries of Christian history, violence in the pursuit of social, economic or political goals is authoritatively declared to be unchristian. And it is the poor, not the rich, who are reminded of that."<sup>42</sup>

As I hope to be able to show later, the violence of revolution is not its outstanding characteristic, nor the mark by which alone the present revolutions are to be judged in Christian conscience. "We have to reject the doctrine that violence is the essence of the revolution, whether it comes from the side of the establishment or of the revolution."<sup>43</sup> In the meantime, perhaps the most realistic comment on

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<sup>41</sup> Op. cit., p. 111.

<sup>42</sup> J. Da Viegá Coutinho, "The Church and the Third World". Cross Currents, XVIII, 4, (Fall 1968) p. 447. Emphasis mine.

<sup>43</sup> The Uppsala Report 1968, (World Council of Churches, Geneva) p. 164. The Quebec "Quiet Revolution" described social and political change without accompanying violence.

the issue is again from a member of the "Slant" group: "So long as the choice is not between violence and non-violence, but between different forms of violence, or complicity in violence, we need above all to avoid self-deception."<sup>44</sup>

Basic to a theology of revolution, if one may proceed to propose one in outline, must be a break with historical determinism. Concerning the latter, Moltmann points out that there can be no coming to terms with the "cosmologico-mechanistic way of thinking such as is found in the positivistic sciences."<sup>45</sup> Since hope is impossible in "a world without alternatives, without possibilities and without any future, or in the factualized and institutionalized relationships of the scientific civilization of modern society," so also is a theology of revolution.

The work of "opening up" the world to a future that holds both hope and responsibility for man has been mainly the work of Père Teilhard de Chardin. With the posthumous publication of The Phenomenon of Man the world was given a picture of man as integral to the universe; not an alien intruder as in the existentialist view, but part of its development and agent of its future. By sharing his vision, Christians were called to a total acceptance of the earth, to a total rejoicing in the range of responsibilities produced by the fact of creation. This was no liberal-evolutionary gospel, for it still demanded faith to go as far as identifying the goal and purpose of the universe with

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<sup>44</sup> "Mercy and Revolution" by J. Stein, from eds. T. Eagleton, B. Wicker. From Culture to Revolution, p. 245.

<sup>45</sup> Op. cit., p. 93.

the fulfilment of the "Omega Point". An agnostic, like Sir Julian Huxley, as he admits in his foreward to the English edition,<sup>46</sup> was unable to go as far. However, both he and Teilhard de Chardin saw man as "evolution become conscious of itself" and "the leading shoot of evolution".<sup>47</sup>

The implications for theology were revolutionary. Even more were the old static, individualistic and conformist images of "religion" put into discard, giving place to an earthly hope for man in the full expression of his God-given potential. "The Christian. . . must say even to modern man 'Your hope is too small'. And that may be the most effective way of saying 'Your God is too small'. To have articulated this for our generation is surely the great contribution of Teilhard de Chardin. For at this point transcendence, the infinite horizon of life, encounters man in his strength and maturity and responsibility - in other words, what the Bible speaks of as his call to 'sonship' which is its figure not for childish dependence but for the freedom of adult manhood."<sup>48</sup> I am going to have to dwell on this "call to maturity and responsibility" even if it means labouring the point.

In the first place, it is a "call" and not a description. That

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<sup>46</sup> Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, The Phenomenon of Man (London, 1959) Introduction by Sir Julian Huxley. p. 19.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 20 and p. 36.

<sup>48</sup> J.A.T. Robinson, In the End God. (London, 1968) p. 13.

this "call" is compatible with and even necessitated by the understanding of man in the scientific disciplines is an insight largely due to Teilhard de Chardin. In reaching it, he came into conflict with views less scientific and less Biblical than current among Christian thinkers. On one such occasion he wrote, "With Huxley and the majority of the scientists, I, of course, vigorously attacked the immobilist position taken up, alas, by the more Christian-thinking members of the section, such as Gilson, Malik, . . . Battaglia. . . and even Van Dusen."<sup>49</sup> This was in 1954, yet years earlier in China he wrote, "Everything strengthens my conviction that the future can be forced and led only by a group of men united in a common faith in the spiritual future of the earth. 'Get behind me' I would make bold to say, 'all Godless pessimists and all Christian pessimists'."<sup>50</sup> There is a foretaste of his spirit in the controversy between F.D. Maurice, with whom we shall have to deal in the next chapter, and the nineteenth century evangelicals. "It is the question whether the Fall or the Redemption is the ground on which humanity rests."<sup>51</sup> "If by the very law and constitution of His Universe, God contemplates us as members of a body in His Son, we are bound to contemplate ourselves in the same way."<sup>52</sup>

As a result of his emphasis, of course, Teilhard de Chardin has

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<sup>49</sup> Letters From a Traveller, (London, 1967) p. 296.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 224.

<sup>51</sup> F.D. Maurice, The Doctrine of Sacrifice, p. xxxii. Quoted by A.R. Vidler, Witness to the Light, (New York, 1948) p. 31.

<sup>52</sup> F.D. Maurice, Gospel of St. John p. 500; Vidler, p. 35.

been accused of bland optimism. Some critics seem to have forgotten that he was ever personally involved in conflict, as he was in World War I and the Chinese revolution, the Sino-Japanese war and World War II. It was not for lack of evidence that de Chardin gave less emphasis to man's destructive sinfulness and more to his future potential. Perhaps it is true to say that an archeological perspective lessened the anguish of so much waste, but it is certainly not true to say that his optimism was unqualified. "There is another possibility. Obeying a law from which nothing has been exempt in the past, evil may go on growing alongside good, and it too may attain its paroxysm at the end in some specifically new form. There are no summits without abysses."<sup>53</sup> This brings us back to the "call". It is one thing to discern it; it is quite another to answer. "Responding to the call to maturity" can sum up the course of human history, while the evidences of our immaturity are the measure of the distance still to be travelled. Martin Marty chides the "man-come-of-age" school of secular theology,<sup>54</sup> but also supplies the very important and missing element in their work: prophecy. He quotes Eberhart Bethge, the recipient of Bonhoeffer's letters and editor of his work, as saying to an impatient student, "Do you think Bonhoeffer was reporting? He was prophesying. For him the powers had been defeated, Hitler had been conquered by Christ and the world had come of age and

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<sup>53</sup> Phenomenon of Man, p. 288.

<sup>54</sup> Op. cit., p. 78. "The record of the recent past gives every reason to lose confidence in those who are too sure of cultural moods and too ready with a relevant Christian style or comment."

reached its maturity." Marty continues, "Most of the secular theologians have echoed this correction: what they did took on the mode of reporting of man and society. Only a second glance revealed that they were prophesying, arguing from tendency, or writing 'as ifs' about the future: secular man and the secular world were not on schedule, not fully present,"<sup>55</sup> Here is where we come to the area of a viable "theology of revolution".

Faith sees the future as fulfilment, restoration and reconciliation; hope gives assurance that this future is not merely visionary but God's own promise; it is love that demands action towards the realization of this future. "Believing hope will itself provide inexhaustible resources for the creative, inventive imagination of love. It constantly provokes and produces thinking of an anticipatory kind in love to men and the world, in order to give shape to the newly dawning possibilities in the light of the promised future, in order as far as possible to create here the best that is possible."<sup>56</sup> In other words, if Moltmann is correct, and eschatology moves from the appendix of theology to become the predicate of theology then a "theology of revolution" would appear under the heading of "Sanctification" (in Reformed theology; "Justification"

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>56</sup> J. Moltmann, op. cit., p. 34.

in Catholic theology).<sup>57</sup>

Why "revolution" rather than a "theology of social change"? Cox himself supplies the answer in his chapter of that title.<sup>58</sup> "A revolutionary theology, like a revolutionary theory, must make a place for catastrophe, in the technical sense of an event which overturns the order of things."

Because there is a distance still to be travelled, a distance between promise and fulfilment: because men are able to cling to the old rather than accept the new; because there is nothing fatalistic about faith; because men can be very violent in saying "No" to their call - therefore the Church must speak theologically of revolution.

It is not at all a matter of commending social change. This the Church has done, and the advice has been ignored. As Robert McAfee Brown has put it, "No one with four aces calls for a new deal".<sup>59</sup> Neither is it a matter of moral interpretation, to the praise or blame

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<sup>57</sup> Cf. J. H. Newman, Lectures on Justification (1838), p. 96. "Now it so happens that Protestant writers, for the most part, take the word (justification) to mean God's justifying us; whereas, Roman writers seem to use it for our being or continuing justified. For instance, the Council of Trent defines it to be 'not the mere remission of sins, but the sanctification and the renovation of the inner man by the voluntary acceptance of grace and gifts.'" These lectures, given during Newman's Anglican days and now the basis for much of the thought of Hans Küng in Justification (London, 1964), his recent attempt to reconcile Barthian and Tridentine views on the matter, recognize but do not endorse the Protestant emphasis on justification as God's objectively justifying act, with man's response by good works seen separately as the process of sanctification.

<sup>58</sup> Secular City, p. 120.

<sup>59</sup> Quoted by Martin E. Marty, op. cit., p. 105.



of those in different postures in the economic and social order. It is daring to believe that in and through the fact of revolution in our age, God Himself is doing something. This "something" demands the interpretation and response of faith.

"Faith, whenever it develops into hope, causes not rest but unrest, not patience but impatience. It does not calm the unquiet heart, but is itself the unquiet heart in man. Those who hope in Christ can no longer put up with reality as it is, but begin to suffer under it, to contradict it."<sup>60</sup> It is this felt contradiction that is the motivation for an articulate theology of revolution in our era, just as it was for St. Augustine to articulate the Christian alternative to a city founded on self-love in his time. "Hope makes the Christian Church a constant disturbance in human society, seeking as the latter does to stabilize itself into a 'continuing city'. It makes the Church the source of continual new impulses towards the realization of righteousness, freedom and humanity here - in the light of the promised future that is to come."<sup>61</sup>

Recognition of this contradiction - between what is and what should be - has led to Christian ascetic withdrawal as well as to militant puritanism (Savonarola and Calvin) in the past.<sup>62</sup> It is now

<sup>60</sup> J. Moltmann, op. cit., p. 21.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>62</sup> "Ascetic Christianity called the world evil and left it. Humanity is waiting for a revolutionary Christianity which will call the world evil and change it." W. Rauschenbusch, Christianity and the Social Crisis, (New York, 1964) p. 91.

an invitation, not to a piece-meal reformist program with token gestures of social action by converted individuals, but to a concerted and theologically coherent movement by the Christian community. In spite of his stated reluctance, I want to use Fr. Schillebeeckx's own words. "Eschatological hope implies faith that the Christian, by God's justification, is responsible for the terrestrial event itself becoming a history of salvation. In and through his attitude of faith, then, the Christian is already seeking to overcome all that is opposed to salvation in this world, to resist everything that has made and is still making our history a history without salvation, and thus to make salvation triumph."<sup>63</sup> That will do very well to begin with.

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<sup>63</sup> Op. cit., p. 185.

## II

### HISTORICAL SURVEY

"People wish to be settled: only as far as they are unsettled is there any hope for them." - Emerson.

1. Pre - and Post - Reformation Millenary Sects.
2. The American and French Revolutions.
3. Christian Socialism.

Pre - and Post - Reformation Millenary Sects

"As Christians we are committed to working for the transformation of society. In the past we have done it through quiet efforts at social renewal, working in and through the established institutions according to their rules. Today, a significant number of those who are dedicated to the service of Christ and their neighbour assume a more radical or revolutionary position. They do not deny the value of tradition or social order, but they are searching for a new strategy by which to bring about basic change in society without too much delay. . . . At the present moment it is important for us to recognize that this radical position has a solid foundation in Christian tradition and should have its rightful place in the life of the Church and in the ongoing discussion of social responsibility."<sup>1</sup> It is the purpose of this chapter to review the radical position in Christian tradition. Its very existence is unsuspected by many Christians, and its authentic position within Christian tradition would be challenged by some.

In 1649 Europe shuddered to the blow that severed the head of an English king. Catholic monarchs doubtless saw proof of the diabolic origin of Protestantism, since England stood squarely in the Reformation

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<sup>1</sup> The Message of the World Conference on Church and Society, (Geneva, 1966) para. 6. WCCS, p. 49. Emphasis mine.

"bloc". However, not even the sober, Protestant Dutch envoys to the Parliamentary forces could conceal their horror at such an unprecedented act.<sup>2</sup> Assassinations and court intrigues had been known since the beginnings of political history, but premeditated and public regicide was an open break with all previous traditions of sacrosanct authority.

"Almighty God hath created and appointed all things in heaven and earth in a most excellent and perfect order. In heaven he hath appointed distinct and several orders of archangels and angels. In earth he hath assigned kings, princes and other governors under them in all necessary order... every degree of people in their vocation, calling and office..."<sup>3</sup> While this expressed the sentiments of the Reformers, it is also true that the Reformation was itself an expression of conviction against the pressure of hostile and established authority, the very success of which spelt danger to civil as well as ecclesiastical hierarchies.<sup>4</sup> There were preludes to the Reformation, challenges to authority that were uttered as early as the twelfth century. Joachim of Fiora "took a critical attitude toward the institutional, universal Church of the present time."<sup>5</sup> Although not

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<sup>2</sup> C.V. Wedgwood, Trial of Charles I, (London, 1964) p. 171.

<sup>3</sup> Quotation from the "Homily on Obedience" in English Studies in the Making of the Protestant Tradition, G. Rupp, (London, 1966) p. 74.

<sup>4</sup> See below, p.36.

<sup>5</sup> Ernst Benz, op. cit., p. 36.

himself a revolutionary, he consciously prepared the way in his writings for a radical overhaul of the existing system.<sup>6</sup> According to Joachim, the history of mankind was to have three ages: the age of the Father, an age of tutelage under law, roughly corresponding to the period of the Old Testament; the age of the Son, in which men are raised to the status of children, but still under discipline - corresponding to his own era from the birth of Christ to the year 1260 A.D. Then would come the age of the Spirit, in which men would attain freedom, the Church would be purified and the Spirit would lead the world into a "new creation". By the comparison made between the Church of the second period, the Church of Peter, and the "contemplative, spiritual" Church, the Church of John, Joachim pointed dramatically to the need for reformation as well as promising it. A more active disturber of the peace was the Englishman, John Wycliffe. As heretic, communist, and proto-Protestant, Wycliffe was recognized as a danger both by ecclesiastical and national leaders. "He was acknowledged to be the greatest theological scholar and thinker in a centre of learning... there was only one Oxford, and at this time Wycliffe reigned there supreme."<sup>7</sup> First of all in favour with young Richard II for his nationalist and anti-papal sentiments, he was later in favour with and much quoted by the agitators who prepared for the Peasants' Rising, 1381. John Ball, the priest who gave

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., pp. 35 - 48.

<sup>7</sup> G.M. Trevelyan, England in the Age of Wycliffe, (London, 1946) p. 42.

ideological direction to the peasants could have taken his doggerel,

"When Adam delved and Eve span,

Who then was the gentleman?"

and related it to the earlier published views of Wycliffe in De Dominio Civili that "all things must be held in common by the righteous, for all the righteous possess all."<sup>8</sup> Indeed, when a papal bull summoned him to trial in 1377 "he was charged with declaring that the 'Saints are in actual possession of all things'. It was on this speculative basis that he had, in his earlier works, propounded a theory of communism..."<sup>9</sup>

Trevelyan comments that "the heresies imputed to the reformer were not so important from their doctrinal as from their political aspect."<sup>10</sup> It was certainly the political consequences of the Rising, and the execution of its leaders, including John Ball, that turned the tide against Wycliffe and his unorthodox views. Ironically, as he had proceeded to propose further church reforms (emphasis on preaching, communion in both kinds, a Church divested of power and wealth), he had become more conservative in his views about civil authority and property. "Lollardry had no connection with socialism, or even with social revolt. If at the time of the Peasants' Rising, any of the Lollard preachers, misrepresenting or

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 199.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 81.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 80.

disregarding Wycliffe's opinions, had attacked lay property or the rights of the manor lords, they soon ceased to do so."<sup>11</sup> After Wycliffe's strangely peaceful death at Lutterworth in 1384, it was for others to take up the tenor of his teaching, and to follow it to its social as well as ecclesiastical consequences.

The sister of the Bohemian King Wenceslaus, Anne, was married to England's Richard II in 1382, and while Bohemia failed to provide England with a royal succession, England provided Bohemia with a seed of schism. "Wycliffe's philosophical works were brought to Bohemia soon after the year 1380, that is, while their author was still alive. . . Somewhat later. . . before the close of the fourteenth century, the English reformer's theological views began to penetrate into Bohemia."<sup>12</sup>

A young priest, Jan Hus, soon adopted Wycliffe's cause as his own. He was "greatly attracted by the fervour of the English reformer in his attack upon the various evils in the Church, and by his determined efforts to bring about a better state of affairs. Hus' own efforts to uplift the morality of the people and the priesthood took on, thereby, a sharper tone, increased definiteness and decision."<sup>13</sup> The influence of Hus grew, while the official opposition to him was in disarray due to the contest between the Roman and Avignon popes. From the university of Prague, as Wycliffe from Oxford, and once

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 339.

<sup>12</sup> Cambridge Mediaeval History, (1936) VIII, pp. 48-49.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 51.



again with royal protection - that of Wenceslaus - Hus campaigned for reform until he was summoned to appear before the Council of Constance, 1414-1415. Before his condemnation by the Council on July 6, 1415, a significant aspect of Hus' defence lay in his appeal for dialogue.

"Le concile refusait de traiter Huss d'égal à égal et d'entrer avec lui dans une discussion véritable, Huss de son côté ne consentait pas à la capitulation sans condition qu'on exigeait de lui."<sup>14</sup> On the eve of his execution, a last minute appeal to Hus to recant failed. "Le concile . . . persiste à exiger que Huss reconnaisse sans discussion la fausseté des positions critiquées dans ses écrits. Huss refuse."<sup>15</sup> In tears, Hus cried out "Je ne puis pas ne pas desirer qu'ils me montrent des opinions meilleures et plus probables que celles que j'ai écrites et enseignées. Si on me les montre, je suis prêt à révoquer." In a significant gesture of authority: "Un des évêques présents lui répond, condescendant et allant plus loin que peut aller quelqu'un qui n'est pas venu pour discuter mais pour constater,<sup>16</sup> 'Veux-tu te croire plus sage que tout le concile?' . . . 'Non, je ne veux pas me prétendre plus sage que

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<sup>14</sup> L'Heresie de Jean Huss, Paul de Vooght, (Louvain, 1960) p. 425. In the quotations, the author's spelling of Hus is retained.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 448.

<sup>16</sup> An echo of this attitude is to be heard 500 years later: "A bishop who consents to enter into public argument with one of his priests is not disposed to listen, but only to proclaim and condemn without appeal." G. Guzman, Camilo Torres (New York, 1969) p. 140.

tout le concile mais, je vous le demande, donnez-moi le dernier des théologiens du concile pour qu'il me persuade par des arguments meilleurs et plus efficaces que les miens et je suis prêt à révoquer à l'instant'."17 After delivery to the secular arm, "Coiffé de sa dérisoire couronne de papier, Huss sort de l'église, entouré de la cohorte des soldats. Le premier spectacle qui s'offre à sa vue est un grand bûcher où brûlent ses livres. Huss ne peut s'empêcher de sourire. Il savait sans doute que le combat entre la pensée et la force brutale n'est jamais gagné par la partie qui paraît la plus forte. Tôt ou tard, la pensée triomphe."

Books and author died in the flames, but the challenge he put to authority did not die with him. In the same year, a gathering of Bohemian and Moravian nobility protested to the Council and - further - entered upon a union (September 5) which would submit both papal and conciliar decisions to the test of God's law, which would only submit to Bishops that acted in accordance with the divine law, and would allow priests to preach who had not been convicted of error by Holy Writ: such a decision to be made by the university of Prague, not by bishops. "Thus, the Bohemian and Moravian nobles entered upon the path of open revolt against the supreme ecclesiastical power."18 The Bohemian Reformation that followed this act of defiance contained all the elements that were to become familiar in the

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17 de Vooght, op. cit., p. 449.

18 Cambridge Mediaeval History, VIII, p. 66.

following century: a break with papal rule, the appeal to Holy Scripture as the standard of belief and conduct; the seizure of Church lands and wealth; a vigorous vernacular (in this case Czech), and an increased national consciousness.

"Although Hussitism was in origin and in substance a moral, religious and ecclesiastical movement, there entered into it practically at the very outset certain endeavours to alter the social and economic conditions."<sup>19</sup> An extreme wing of the movement, the Taborites, in chiliastic enthusiasm "proclaimed not only the abolition of serfdom and of villein dues and services, but also the replacement of private property by ownership in common. Communistic principles were put into practice by the establishment of common treasuries to which the wealthier farmers on selling their produce handed over the proceeds." As an indirect consequence of the troubled times, when the country was without a king capable of exercising sovereign power (1419 - 1436), the responsibilities of the nobles increased, the independence and importance of the town burghers increased, with consequences that proved longer lasting than the radical demands for "abolition of the royal power, community of property, abolition of all taxes and the possession of women in common."<sup>20</sup> These demands disappeared as the conditions became more stable and less revolutionary.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 85.

A contemporary Czech theologian has summarised the contributions of this era to ours: "In Hussite Bohemia and Moravia the Word of God really was understood and explained in a revolutionary sense, in the attempt to change not only the Church but also society (in accordance with the Gospel). The 'social dimension' of Christian obedience was very clearly recognized from the time of Hus onwards, and it was also expressed in practice. . . . Recent research shows that even the important question of a 'theology of revolution' was tackled - at least an important beginning was made."<sup>21</sup>

This period certainly underscores the difficulty pointed out by J.B. Metz in his call for a "political theology". "How can the Church as an institution be an embodiment of such (social) criticism? Doesn't every institution imply an anti-critical tendency?"<sup>22</sup> In the Church's responses to both Wycliffe and Hus we can see the defensive reaction of an institution to criticism, especially one as magisterial and socially dominant as the mediaeval Church. Her own accommodation to feudalism was too complete to recognize a legitimate call to reform when it came. We notice, however, the same defensiveness in the Reformation itself, as the case of Thomas Müntzer will demonstrate. "When was the Church such an institution (of social criticism) in fact?" is the next question asked by Metz

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<sup>21</sup> J.M. Lochman, "An Ecumenical Theology of Revolution", New Theology No. 6, eds. M.E. Marty and D.G. Peerman (New York, 1969), p. 116.

<sup>22</sup> Faith and the World of Politics, Concilium XXXVI, p. 10. See Chapter 3 for further discussion of Fr. Metz and "political theology". He teaches theology at the University of Münster.

which must be met by both Catholic and Protestant silence. Instead, individuals and sects have provided the necessary expressions of commitment to "a new Heaven and a new earth", a vision which is now being rediscovered by the churches, either as the goal of a living hope or as the memory of a forgotten promise.<sup>23</sup>

The revolutionary Christian hope broke out anew in the Lutheran Reformation, and then, almost immediately, in the Peasants' Revolt of 1525. "Luther, looked upon simply as the liberator, became the great reliance of all, to whom even the peasants naively and yearningly looked at first. The consequence: as he became the revolutionary declaration of maturity by the people of the church over against the ruling church hierarchy, so came he to escalate the peasants' attempt to attain self-sufficiency over against their rulers."<sup>24</sup> The Twelve Articles<sup>25</sup> of the peasants express both a continuity with the "new teaching" and also a rejection of some antinomian "Christian excuse for the revolt". . . "that no one should obey but all should everywhere rise in revolt and rush together to reform or perhaps destroy altogether the authorities, both lay and ecclesiastic."<sup>26</sup> The peasants couched their demands in

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<sup>23</sup> . . . "eschatology and its mobilizing, revolutionizing and critical effects upon history as it has now to be lived were left to fanatical sects and revolutionary groups." J. Moltmann, op. cit., p.1.

<sup>24</sup> J. Lortz, Die Reformation in Deutschland, (Freiburg, 1962), quoted in Reformation and Authority, ed. Kyle C. Sessions, (Lexington, Mass., 1968) p. 11.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 17, from F. Engels, The Peasant War in Germany.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

Scriptural terms . . . "you will release us from serfdom as true Christians unless it can be shown from the Gospel that we are serfs"<sup>27</sup> and offered to renounce any claim "if any one or more of the articles here set forth should not be in agreement with the word of God."<sup>28</sup> Luther himself simply over-reacted. In his letter against the peasants<sup>29</sup> he likens rebellion to "a great fire, which attacks and lays waste a whole land . . . Nothing can be more poisonous, hurtful or devilish than a rebel", and then calls on the princes to "Stab, smite, slay, whoever can." Lutheranism has still not recovered from this total reliance on civil authority by the very man who had loosed the rebellion against papal authority. "One cannot so defiantly and dauntlessly use provocative force to demolish the old church without having most of the socially oppressed drawing conclusions in the manner of the peasants."<sup>30</sup> For Luther, of course, the upsets to authority were in two different worlds, and a religious radical could be - and in his case was - a political conservative. Especially abhorrent to him was a man like Müntzer, radical in both sets of relationships.

"By the Magisterial Reformers, Thomas Müntzer was considered the personification of the social and religious unrest to which the new evangelical ideas could lead without the support and the constraint

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 18. The Third Article.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 19. The Twelfth Article.

<sup>29</sup> "Against the Robbing and Murdering Hordes of Peasants", ed. K. Sessions, op. cit., p. 38.

<sup>30</sup> J. Lortz, op. cit., p. 14.

of the reform-minded princes."<sup>31</sup> Influenced in his thinking both by his study of the acts of the Councils of Constance and Basel<sup>32</sup> and also by the teachings of Joachim of Fiore,<sup>33</sup> Müntzer became progressively more radical, both doctrinally and socially. In the year 1524 he preached a surprising sermon before Duke John, brother of the Elector of Saxony: surprising in that "so distinguished a company of magistrates listened without immediate protest to so inflammatory an appeal to Christian revolution".<sup>34</sup> In the same year he translated words into actions, and joined the peasant revolt. "Thomas Müntzer has drawn the consequences of this mystical spiritualization: before God, all men are equal. Further Christian insistence upon privileges of rank is, therefore, contrary to the will of God. There is another revolutionary conclusion: the holders of status privileges are unwilling to surrender them voluntarily as good Christians should. On the contrary, they continue to exploit burgesses and peasants, they fight against the gospel which is the gospel of equality. Therefore, in God's name, kill them."<sup>35</sup> During a previous stay in Prague, Müntzer had consented to the Taborite chiliasm, which justifies the violence of the elect. Certainly his language goes far beyond a "love for

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<sup>31</sup> G.H. Williams, The Radical Reformation, (Philadelphia, 1962), p. 44. In all the following references Williams' spelling of Müntzer is retained for consistency.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>35</sup> E. Benz, op. cit., p. 58.

neighbour" which in Camilo Torres must forcibly reject the injustices to that neighbour. "The eternal God has ordered us to push you from your throne with the force given to us. For us you are useless to Christendom. You are a pernicious scourge of the friends of God."<sup>36</sup> This is the kind of personal invective he addressed to his enemies. But it was they who carried the day.

Perhaps because of his personal violence, the frenzied fanaticism that led his peasants into slaughter at Mühlhausen in 1525, Müntzer has been a neglected figure in Christian history. "We devote 100 pages to Luther, and three lines to Müntzer. But why?" asks Harvey Cox.<sup>37</sup>

Marxists, on the other hand, have since Engels<sup>38</sup> found in him a corroboration of their view of history: as opposed to Luther, Müntzer was the people's hero and liberator. After his death by execution and the merciless crushing of the rebellion, the Reformation was over as a popular movement. From then on it served as a useful alibi for princely greed. This thesis has recently been

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>37</sup> On Not Leaving It To The Snake, (New York, 1969), p. 14.

<sup>38</sup> "From the equality of man before God, it made the inference to civil equality and even, in part, to human equality. Heaven was to be sought in this life, not beyond, and it was. . . the task of believers, to establish Heaven, the Kingdom of God, here on earth. . . There is more than one Communist sect of modern times which, even on the eve of the March Revolution (1848), did not possess a theoretical arsenal as rich as that of the Müntzerian sects of the sixteenth century." Engels, Peasant War In Germany. Quoted by R. Garaudy, From Anathema to Dialogue, p. 113.



denied in a documented case by Franz Lau;<sup>39</sup> nevertheless, among Communists Müntzer is still a "forerunner of socialism". "Ernst Bloch also devoted a monograph to him and. . . in the Eastern zone Müntzer is nowadays one of the few legitimate subjects a church historian is permitted to handle."<sup>40</sup> With a Marxists's view of these pre-Reformation revolutionary movements we will go on to consider their later developments. "The aspect of 'protest' linked to the Christian discovery of the importance of the moment of 'subjectivity', and the 'apocalyptic' pole of Christianity, as opposed to the 'Constantinian' pole, reappear in many historical movements in which religious faith, far from being an opium, plays the role of a leaven in the people's struggle. Marx and Engels showed examples of this in the case of John Hus and Thomas Müntzer. Protest here took on a militant aspect and expanded into insurrection."<sup>41</sup>

"The radical sectarians fanned out in utter disregard of territorial boundaries and local laws, emissaries and exemplars as they were of a gospel at once old and new, to be shared by the whole

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<sup>39</sup> Essay in Reformation and Authority, "Did the Popular Reformation really stop with the Peasants' Defeat?" pp. 94-101. Lau examines events in such cities as Magdeburg, Göttingen, Hamburg, Lübeck, Rostock and Hannover, and concludes that "reformation in the North German towns between 1525 and 1532 was a spontaneous reformation coming from below, just as in the early days. . ." Op. cit., p. 100.

<sup>40</sup> Benz, op. cit., p. 53. See Chapter III, 2. for material on E. Bloch.

<sup>41</sup> R. Garaudy, op. cit., p. 113.

world."<sup>42</sup> While the main-line reformers slowly established territorial bases for their respective traditions and interpretations (Zurich, Geneva, Wittenburg), and as a consequence progressed and regressed according to the prevailing princely and political climate, the smaller sects sprang into life and spread almost with the speed of wind-borne seed.

Initially "dependent upon (the Magisterial Reformation) in the recovery of the Bible and in the rejection of the mediaeval synthesis of Scripture, tradition and papal authority",<sup>43</sup> the radical groups claimed a degree of personal freedom and covered a range of doctrinal variety that incurred the censure of the parent movement. The Anabaptists, spiritual heirs of the Bohemian Taborites and the Zwickau 'Torchites', were especially prolific and were regarded almost as much an enemy to the English Elizabethan establishment as were the "papists". In 1560, Bishop Jewel of Salisbury wrote, "We found at the beginning of the reign of Elizabeth a large and inauspicious crop of Arians, Anabaptists and other pests, which I know not how, but as mushrooms spring up in the night and in darkness, so these sprang up in that darkness and unhappy night of Marian times."<sup>44</sup>

In the Radical Reformation Williams documents the almost

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<sup>42</sup> G.H. Williams, op. cit., p. 833.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 816.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 782.

bewildering array of diverse practices and doctrines of the sects, from the world-denying Mennonites, gathered round the leadership of Menno Simons, to the revolutionary Melchiorites; from the Libertines' individualism to the Hutterites' communism. Yet there were themes common to them all, such as local autonomy,<sup>45</sup> personal responsibility and an apocalyptic judgement on their present environment; these were to nourish an ideological confrontation with social norms and civil authority until the dramatic outbreak of the English Revolution. Thus it was that in little over a hundred years from the time of the Müntzer theocracy, Charles I of England found himself facing a formidable, Puritan array of Presbyterians, Independants, Familists, Levellers, Brownists, Seekers, Ranters, Quakers,<sup>46</sup> and Fifth Monarchy men: all united in one purpose - to resist by force and in God's name the encroachments of the royal power.

"In the ferment of revolution, ephemeral sects and congregations multiplied beyond counting, often under 'mechanic-preachers', self-taught laymen. . . among them were radicals in politics as well as in religion, who were suspected by the timid rich of advocating 'anarchy and community'. This world of sects was dynamic: it was in motion, straining towards new visions of man's relation to God and

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<sup>45</sup> The request to elect the local priest was the first of the Twelve Articles. Sessions, op. cit., p. 17.

<sup>46</sup> "We Quakers were born during an earlier revolution, and were born relevant to it." R.W. Tucker, "Revolutionary Faithfulness", New Theology No. 6, p. 200.

new forms of human society."<sup>47</sup>

Even before the trial and execution of Charles in 1649, the old form of society was dying. It was the tragedy of Charles, and of the Anglican establishment behind him, that he stood for the "divine right of kings" in contradiction to an age that had come to doubt the divine right of any institution. On the other hand, it was the tragedy of Oliver Cromwell that, having effected a transfer of power, he tamed the creative spirit that had moved through the ranks of his New Model Army into the institutionalism of the Protectorate, which crumbled in its turn. "The men whom Captain Cromwell enlisted in his troop of horse because 'they had some conscience of what they did' were no longer the same men when he promoted them to his House of Lords and saw to it that they had rent rolls long enough to sustain their dignity as the new ruling class. The idealism of the Puritan Revolution went to pieces in a society as ruthlessly acquisitive as any. . . ever witnessed."<sup>48</sup> In effect, Cromwell cleared the social scene of some remaining vestiges of mediaeval privilege, only to introduce the narrow, rigid "rule of the Saints", of purse-proud merchants, in place of the Kingdom of God on earth.

Williams sees the English constitution as a permanent legacy of the age of the Civil Wars and the Commonwealth, and a major resource

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<sup>47</sup> H.N. Brailsford, The Levellers and the English Revolution, (London, 1961), p. 43.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

in the evolution of "modern, Christian, democratic, critical pluralism."<sup>49</sup> This estimate, however generous, seems almost to mock the contribution of those who, in Moltmann's terminology, fought with furious idealism, worked and sacrificed for their future of justice, peace and righteousness. "The brief moment when English institutions, under the flame of revolution, were malleable passed with the consolidation of Oliver's dictatorship. Thereafter, unable to fight with either pen or sword, the kind of Englishmen who had begun under the sea-green banner to work for a true Commonwealth sought salvation, as did Lilburne himself,<sup>50</sup> in some form of subjective religion - in his century in the Society of Friends,<sup>51</sup> in the next in Methodism."<sup>52</sup>

As if history didn't provide enough warnings, here is one to those who see in present discontents the material and the call to

<sup>49</sup> Loc. cit., p. 864. Cf. Prof. H.D. Wendland's address to Geneva, 1966. "It is in this sense that we must think today of an ethic of revolutionary Christian humanism, which fulfils the heritage of the revolutionary Christian groups of the English revolution and of puritanism." WCCS Report, p. 24.

<sup>50</sup> "Note that one of the Levellers, John Lilburne, was perhaps the first to set forth a 'theology of revolution'. He wrote that 'the most authentic servants of Christ have always been the worst enemies of tyranny and the oppressor'. (Legitimate Defense, 1653)." Jacques Ellul, Violence, p. 21.

<sup>51</sup> R.W. Tucker, in his essay in New Theology No. 6, p. 200, does not agree with the subjective orientation of the early Friends. The first Friends "were men who were ardently concerned to change their world in fundamental ways. . . The founders of our faith were not reformers. They were revolutionists in the sense in which that term is commonly used today." Perhaps the Baptist John Bunyan would be a better example, from soldier in the New Model Army to preacher.

<sup>52</sup> Brailsford, op. cit., p. 15.

Christian involvement in revolution. Part of the material to hand is romanticism, some fanaticism, some irresponsibility, some ill-defined discontent, some clear goals, some spiritual insight and some ethical motivation. The mixture may be sufficiently volatile to produce an explosion, and for anarchists this is enough. But for intelligent and effective Christian participation in political and social change, it is required to fill in the gap between the explosion and the reconstructed new order.<sup>53</sup>

We have seen some evidence of the men who heard a call to change themselves and their world, and responded. At least their experience provides us with counter-evidence to the static and repressive institutionalism of past Christendom. They refused to accommodate: the consequences on themselves and on their world, the partial expression and the partial frustration of their highest hopes, are part of what we must consider in outlining a theology of revolution. Perhaps Miss Reuther is right in suggesting<sup>54</sup> that the sixteenth century sects give us some guidance in establishing the relationship between the institutional Church and the "underground" churches of our own time. The latter need the institution to provide the framework and the continuity of the Christian community; and yet the institution desperately needs the small, spontaneous, autonomous groups that give deep, personal

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<sup>53</sup> "But Christians must think of the day after the revolution, when justice must be established by clear minds and in good conscience. ." WCCS, p. 143.

<sup>54</sup> Rosemary Reuther, "The Free Church Movement in Contemporary Catholicism", New Theology No. 6, pp. 269-287.

expression to the conviction of its members. The life of the group will be and should be transitory, since there is nothing more pathetic than the numerous institutional fossils that remain from past enthusiasms, but they can yield their freshness and the richness of their experience to the institution. This can be renewed and made more flexible in its turn, going on to provide the depositum fidei for more groups in the following generations. How this can be done without mutual condemnations we have not yet discovered. If the Marxists are right, the dialectic proposed by Miss Reuther will be frustrated by the real dialectic of history. By its very continuity, the established institution will be allied with the economic power structure and therefore unable to accept the critical and revolutionary insights of the groups.

The American and French Revolutions

G.M. Trevelyan remarked that in the mediaeval period, "revolutionary ideas were as naturally religious as in the eighteenth century they were naturally irreligious",<sup>55</sup> but this irreligion needs closer scrutiny. In the history of the sects, we have already seen the breakdown of a total identification between religion and order; perhaps it will also be possible to see some religious motivation in later insurrectionist movements. Arnold Toynbee doesn't hesitate to assert that "the impetus behind the American Revolution is the spirit of Christianity".<sup>56</sup> For her part, however, Hannah Arendt dismisses the "not infrequent claim that all modern revolutions are essentially Christian in origin."<sup>57</sup> Yet even she noted the indebtedness of early American history to the Puritan influence. "If there was any theoretical influence that contributed to the compacts and agreements in early American history it was - of course - the Puritans' reliance on the Old Testament."<sup>58</sup> If this is meant to acknowledge

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<sup>55</sup> England in the Age of Wycliffe, p. 195.

<sup>56</sup> America and the World Revolution, (London, 1962), p. 77.

<sup>57</sup> On Revolution, p. 18.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 171. Also, "The model in whose image Western mankind had construed the quintessence of all laws. . . was itself not Roman at all; it was Hebrew in origin and represented by the divine Commandments of the Decalogue." Ibid., p. 190.



mankind's debt to the influence of Judaism without also considering the Christian intermediaries, in my opinion her attempt fails at the very point we are considering, namely revolution.

Along with very many other of his contemporaries, Oliver Cromwell himself considered at one point in his career migrating to the New World.<sup>59</sup> It is probably not true that he and his cousin, Hampden, actually set sail, only to be turned back by an Order in Council, but the undisputed fact of Puritan migration both before and after the Revolution must be allowed some influence on subsequent American history. Was it possible that the same mood that dethroned a king did not influence the New England colonies? It may be true, accepting her definition of revolution as a modern phenomenon, that "no revolution was ever made in the name of Christianity",<sup>60</sup> but Miss Arendt considerably overstates her case when she adds, rather curiously, "prior to the modern age". If, by her definition, revolution is a modern phenomenon, then by definition no revolution was ever made prior to the modern age. But why waste time in redundancies? If she means that no rebellion or insurrectionary movement was ever carried out in the name of Christianity prior to the modern era, then we have just seen in the earlier part of the chapter that she is historically incorrect. Whatever we call them, revolutions did break out, and in the name of Christianity, and they cannot be dismissed as simply "fore-

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<sup>59</sup> J. Morley, Oliver Cromwell, (London, 1902) p. 17, who also quotes the Royalist historian Clarendon: "So near was this poor kingdom at that time to its deliverance."

<sup>60</sup> Op. cit., p. 19.

runners of modern mass hysterias".<sup>61</sup> "Politically without consequence and historically futile" certainly does not describe with any accuracy the spirit of personal worth, autonomy and vocation that constituted the birth-right of the modern western world as it emerged from the era of religious struggles.

Finally, in direct contradiction to Arendt's negative assessment of Christian revolutionary influence, Cox<sup>62</sup> reminds us of the Puritan influence in the town meetings which, according to Miss Arendt provided the practical exercise in self-government and "public happiness" strengthening the revolutionary will.<sup>63</sup> Once the fighting had broken out, it was the heirs of the English Revolution who won the second round against monarchy in the struggle for independence. "The bulk of the revolutionary armies came from dissenters of the reformed or Calvinist sects. . . . If, therefore, we wish to understand the religious impulse of the Revolution, we must examine the relation between puritanism, in the broad sense, and the democratic philosophy of the Enlightenment."<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>62</sup> "But the most important contribution of the Puritans, as Michael Walzer has shown in his brilliant book The Revolution of the Saints may not be churches at all, but the fact that they originated the politics of participatory democracy." On Not Leaving it to the Snake, p. 15.

<sup>63</sup> Op. cit., p. 114.

<sup>64</sup> R.B. Perry, Puritanism and Democracy, (New York, 1944), p. 190.

It was the American Revolution, together with the French Revolution, that was the formative crisis of the modern era. However, "it was the French and not the American revolution that set the world on fire. . . . The sad truth of the matter is that the French Revolution which ended in disaster has made world history, while the American Revolution, so triumphantly successful, has remained an event of little more than local importance."<sup>65</sup> While giving an important definition of the "central idea of revolution, which is the foundation of freedom, that is the foundation of the body politic which guarantees the space where freedom can appear",<sup>66</sup> Arendt fails to do more than deplore the lack of historical impact made by the American bid for independence.

Both Sir Arnold Toynbee and Miss Arendt comment on present-day American attitudes towards revolution. Miss Arendt writes that "Fear of revolution has been the hidden leitmotif of post-war American foreign policy in its desperate attempts at stabilization of the status quo."<sup>67</sup> However, Toynbee is less accurate in his historical assessment: "The American people is now feeling and acting as a champion of an affluent minority's vested interests, in dramatic contrast to America's historic role as the revolutionary leader of the depressed majority of mankind."<sup>68</sup> As Arendt points out, the facts are

<sup>65</sup> H. Arendt., op. cit., p. 49.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 121.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 219.

<sup>68</sup> A. Toynbee, op. cit., p. 21.

that the American revolution was affluent from the start, and that it was no tyranny against which the colonists fought.<sup>69</sup> Theirs was "the only revolution in which compassion played no role in the motivation of the actors",<sup>70</sup> and to that extent it was certainly a deviation from the Christian radical tradition. The "social question" was excluded; the end of negro slavery was not part of the cause of liberty. In spite of Miss Arendt's high praise of the American Revolution as the one "that succeeded where all others were to fail",<sup>71</sup> its success has largely been ignored by the world because it remained essentially bourgeois. Without either the "passion of compassion"<sup>72</sup> or an apocalyptic vision, the success of its comfortable constitution has little to say to nations where an appalling waste of human potential and life prompts men to look and work for a change in the present state of affairs. Far from leading a depressed majority to brighter horizons, Jefferson looked at France two years before its Revolution and wrote that "of twenty millions of people. . . there are nineteen millions more wretched, more accursed in every circumstance of human existence than the most conspicuously wretched individual of the whole United States".<sup>73</sup> Again, negroes were omitted from his generalization. "Not

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<sup>69</sup> Op. cit., p. 219.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 199.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>73</sup> Cited by H. Arendt, op. cit., p. 62.

for a moment did it occur to him that people 'so loaded with misery' . . . would be able to achieve what had been achieved in America."<sup>74</sup>

They didn't, and the impact of the French "failure" has had serious effects on subsequent Christian attitudes towards revolution. What distinguished the French revolution from their own also condemned it in American eyes. "The founding fathers of the United States lived to witness the French Revolution, and at least one eminent of them, John Adams, put on record his repudiation and rejection of the American Revolution's eldest daughter after she had jilted Lafayette and had plunged into Jacobinism."<sup>75</sup> What distinguished the French Revolution from the American has also condemned it and all subsequent movements of similar mould from a Christian standpoint. It was obsessed with the "social question"; it was a frenzied explosion of desperation; it was theoretical, with no previous experience of self-government; it was increasingly anti-Christian; it was uncontrolled and uncontrollable; unlike their American counterparts, the French revolutionaries were unable to found a new republic under a new constitution, as they were destroyed by the very forces they had unleashed.

This is now the norm for our Christian understanding of revolution, although Chalmers Johnson in his book Revolution and the Social

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>75</sup> A. Toynbee, op. cit., p. 14.

System recognizes six types of revolution,<sup>76</sup> of which the Jacobin or Communist is one infrequent type. It is the kind of revolution most feared by the developed and nominally Christian nations of North America and Western Europe, and yet it is the most nearly suited to the desperation of the underprivileged nations of the "Third World". What needs to be recognized in any theological evaluation of revolution is the sociological influence that has precluded precisely this evaluation until now. Because the churches of the dissenting and radical traditions were not identified with the interests of the British Crown, it was possible for a revolution to be carried through in the American colonies with the active support of Christians. The rapid respectability of the American regime, followed almost immediately by the totally different kind of uprising in France, succeeded in distracting Christian attention away from the nature of the challenge posed by the revolutionary phenomenon, to a renewed defence of authority. Because the Church in France was closely linked with the feudalism of which Louis XVI was the "Most Christian" summit, it was only possible to carry through a revolution in defiance of established Christian institutions. A

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<sup>76</sup> Quoted by George Celestin, "A Christian Looks at Revolution, New Theology No. 6; pp. 96 - 97. The other types are: Jacquerie (e.g. Peasants' Revolt); millenarian rebellion (e.g. Munster); Anarchistic (e.g. Vendée reaction against the French Revolution); coup d'état (e.g. Nasser in Egypt); and militarized mass insurrection (e.g. China and Viet Nam).

similar situation existed in Russia,<sup>77</sup> and we face another today. It is because the churches are in the main identified with the interests of the international middle-class, and because the revolutions of this century have begun in Jacobin fashion, that the Christian now finds himself an alien figure in a revolutionary world. "Because of the Church's proclivities for alliances with the establishments, the great revolutions of the West, beginning with the Peasants' Revolt and climaxing with the Russian revolution, have become progressively more anti-Christian."<sup>78</sup>

Negative reaction from the Christian community has also been provoked by the historical pattern of revolution betrayed, resistance to tyranny leading to an even greater tyranny (Cromwell, Napoleon, Stalin), that has strengthened doubts about revolution as a solution to social problems. Two reactions to the Colombian priest Camilo Torres<sup>79</sup> are worth quoting in this regard. The first from a fellow priest: "When it becomes necessary to change the columns which support a building to substitute others, these must be ready and proven to be better; otherwise everything, including

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<sup>77</sup> "Our Church, in the persons of part of its hierarchy and part of its clergy, went through all the stages of rejection, opposition and even direct action against the revolution and the changes it brought to the life of the Church. . . Already well before the revolution, as well as during the revolution itself, large numbers. . . left the church and broke with Christianity." Arch-priest Borovoy of the Russian Orthodox Church, speaking at Geneva, 1966. WCCS, p. 26.

<sup>78</sup> H. Cox, On Not Leaving It To The Snake, p. 18.

<sup>79</sup> Further references to Camilo Torres, see pp. 80, 115 and 117.

the good which one wanted to save will founder. This has been the lot of every violent revolution which destroys without being able to replace."<sup>80</sup> His Archbishop wrote ". . . the final result is infinitely far from what was promised. In changing a legal regime which can be diseased with deficiencies like every human system, and yet within which they could make their voice heard, they finally come under the tyranny of an absolute master or a tyrannical oligarchy which suffocates their more just requests and their now useless laments."<sup>81</sup> Historical examples are too frequent for this warning to be without validity, and for some Christians they serve as a sign of man's fallenness. Against a utopian idealism is set a Niebuhrian pessimism: it is historically impossible, man being what he is, for the ideal to be actualized. We shall return later to this weighty historical and theological objection. It remains to isolate, in this review, one aspect of the Jacobin revolution to which the Christian is drawn, because of his conviction and in spite of discouraging precedents. It is the "politically irrelevant"<sup>82</sup> but potentially redemptive element: compassion.

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<sup>80</sup> G. Guzman, op. cit., p. 151.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p. 138.

<sup>82</sup> H. Arendt, op. cit., p. 81.



Christian Socialism

"The principal effect of the French Revolution on the English was to stiffen their conservatism and to postpone the pressure for reform in Church and State which everywhere made itself felt sooner or later in the nineteenth century."<sup>83</sup> After the two great revolutions, it would be tempting to speculate on the conservatism of Canada, which became a haven for refugees from them both. Quebec Catholicism was physically untouched by the French revolution, but so spiritually seared that, for example, Laurier's brand of liberalism had to contend with the constant suspicion of atheism. Ontario Protestantism, of course, was greatly strengthened by the influx of Loyalists from the United States. It followed that both Upper and Lower Canada were consciously counter-revolutionary, and able to express their attitude in arms when invited to share in American republicanism. However, beyond the mere mention, unrelieved conservatism in Canada presents little material for illustrating a review of this nature. What Dr. Vidler wrote of England would do just as well for Canada of the same period of the early nineteenth century: "Bishops rivalled one another in denouncing subversive teaching, the spirit of democracy, and the blasphemous spirit of

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<sup>83</sup> A.R. Vidler, The Church in an Age of Revolution, (London, 1961), Pelican History of the Church. V., p. 33.

the revolutionary movement."<sup>84</sup>

Something happened in England, however, the slenderest snow-drop token of a spring-time thaw, the beginning again of a religious-revolutionary dialogue under the banner of "Christian Socialism", that did not appear in the longer, colder winter of Canada. In many ways the movement was a failure, and did little more than popularize a Christian upper-class concern for the victims of industrial change. Yet it was remarkable that it happened at all.

The first stirrings which led to the Christian Socialist movement began in 1848, "the year of revolutions". During the Paris revolution, J.M. Ludlow wrote to his friend, the Reverend F.D. Maurice, that "unless Socialism were Christianized, it would shake Christianity to its foundations."<sup>85</sup> Four years earlier Ludlow had adopted the views of the famous Dr. Arnold, Master of Rugby School and father of Matthew Arnold. "To Arnold it seemed a simple matter that the Church must take the lead in combating social outrages, including the conditions of virtual slavery under which the working classes were dragging out their miserable existences. The Church was meant to be a 'society for the purpose of making men like Christ - earth like heaven - the kingdoms of the world the kingdom of Christ'. In consequence, the

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>85</sup> K.S. Inglis, The Churches and the Working Classes in Victorian England, (Toronto, 1963) p. 261.

Church must work for a reformation of political and social life on the principles of the Gospel."<sup>86</sup>

Maurice remarked that the letter from Ludlow awakened thoughts in his mind that had been there for some time. "Some of these thoughts were about the necessity of taming Socialism by bringing Christianity to bear on it, and others concerned the social implications of Christianity which were largely invisible to most of his contemporaries in the churches."<sup>87</sup> From then on, a cause was struck between these two men, one a lawyer with a French background<sup>88</sup> and the other a clergyman of the Church of England. When the movement that they launched, and in which they involved such men as Charles Kingsley and Stewart Headlam, finally failed - it was due to a basic but concealed conflict of understanding between them. This conflict is still relevant.

Maurice was a theologian, brilliant but unorthodox.<sup>89</sup> "In all his practical activities, his participation in politics, in social reform, in educational enterprises, Maurice was simply practising what

<sup>86</sup> T. Christensen, (Copenhagen, 1962), The Origin and History of Christian Socialism 1848 - 1854, p. 53.

<sup>87</sup> K. S. Inglis, op. cit., p. 261.

<sup>88</sup> Ludlow indeed acknowledged his debt to the French revolutionary scene: "Et voilà à quoi je passerai ma vie. . . grâce à mon éducation française, à chercher partout l'égalité là où est la hierarchie, le respect humain là où est l'orgueil. . ." Cited by Christensen, op. cit., p. 42.

<sup>89</sup> Sufficiently so to be discharged from his Professorship of Divinity at King's College, London, 1853.

he preached: he was acting as a theologian."<sup>90</sup> The guiding conviction of his theology was the concept of Divine Order, from which he drew insights that are comparable with the best recent work of the cosmic Lordship of Christ. For example: "Man, the highest being in God's created order, was alone created in the image of God, i.e. created to live in conformity with Christ as the archetype of humanity. Since Christ was THE true man, it followed that man could only live a truly human life when he spent it in self-sacrifice and love towards his fellow-men, and it was such a life of love that Christ incessantly gave to each human being."<sup>91</sup> Also: "So the Church itself is a witness to all mankind of what God has done for them, and what they really are, created in Christ, redeemed by Christ and capable, but for their disbelieving this truth. . . of showing forth his character and his glory. . . Lay hold on this truth. The kingdoms of the world are God's, and the glory of them. You are his by every title of creation and redemption and adoption."<sup>92</sup>

Basic to Maurice's thought was the expression and revealing of this Divine Order against all that either concealed or opposed it. There was a basic conservatism to his ideology quite different from Ludlow's republicanism. To his own satisfaction, "the belief that he

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<sup>90</sup> A.R. Vidler, Witness to the Light, p. 8.

<sup>91</sup> T. Christensen, op. cit., p. 24.

<sup>92</sup> F.D. Maurice, Christmas Day, (London, 1892) p. 180.

was advocating not change but rediscovery removed any tension between his socialism and his conservatism."<sup>93</sup>

For Ludlow, however, there was a readiness to envisage and initiate new things. "I believe now, as I believed then, that had it (the February revolution in 1848) been taken in hand by earnest Christian men, able to understand and grapple with social questions, it might have regenerated France and Europe."<sup>94</sup> In a series of tracts entitled "Politics for the People" both men undertook to spread their views to all classes. But where Maurice insisted on the recognition of the Divine Order underlying present structures (such as the monarchy and the established Church, thereby validated as enduring realities),<sup>95</sup> it was Ludlow who laid the ground rules for social reconstruction that are now being taken up by modern writers. "'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself' - that is the sole code of Duty between man and man, and that is the whole code of Right."<sup>96</sup> This can be compared with: "Human equality which expresses

<sup>93</sup> Inglis, op. cit., p. 264.

<sup>94</sup> Christensen, op. cit., p. 61. Cf. "These Cuban Christians lacked the kind of theology of the world that we have begun to develop; perhaps if they had not retreated (from Castro's revolution) the story of Cuba might have been different." H. Cox, God's Revolution and Man's Responsibilities, p. 54.

<sup>95</sup> "It (achieving human rights) was not to be done by overthrowing the existing political and social order, inasmuch as these rights were already within their reach by virtue of Christ's establishment of a universal fellowship - men only needed to acknowledge this fact." Christensen, op. cit., p. 75.

<sup>96</sup> Christensen, op. cit., p. 78.

itself in the ethical command that man should love his neighbour, is the perpetual inspiration of genuine revolution."<sup>97</sup> Again: "No man can be a Christian who is not a Radical. No man can be a Christian who, if he be once convinced of the existence of moral evil anywhere. . . dares to blind himself to it. . . to shrink from attacking it. No man can be a true Radical who is not a Christian."<sup>98</sup> These words, written 120 years later, were almost a paraphrase: "Thus the Christian in secular society is always in the position of the radical - not in the conventional political sense of that word, but in the sense that nothing which is achieved in secular life can ever satisfy the insight which the Christian is given as to what the true consummation of life in society is."<sup>99</sup> The strictures of two contemporary American theologians, William Stringfellow (Episcopalian) and Michael Novak (Catholic)<sup>100</sup> on modern American life remind us of the fact that the United States has become for the twentieth century what Great Britain was for the nineteenth, the centre of immense economic and military power. This being so, greater knowledge and further study of the Christian Socialists is surely required by those who would undertake their role in our time.

But what is their role? Was it, like Maurice, to direct man's

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<sup>97</sup> Brian Wicker, From Culture to Revolution, p. 280.

<sup>98</sup> Christensen, op. cit., p. 79.

<sup>99</sup> William Stringfellow, Free in Obedience, (New York, 1964), p. 44.

<sup>100</sup> "To be a Christian one must be critical of America, for the old order of American life is inadequate." M. Novak, A Theology of Radical Politics, (New York, 1969), p. 29.

attention to the divinely appointed structure of their lives and to expect conformity to it? Or was it, like Ludlow, to challenge and criticize an inhuman system, ready to pronounce God's judgement upon it?

One attitude reflects a theology of reform, transcendently oriented; the other reflects a theology of revolution, eschatologically oriented.<sup>101</sup>

The immediate consequences of the movement were modest. Socialism ceased to hold for English Christians the terrors that it held for Europeans. In the English Catholic Times a priest commented on Pope Leo's Rerum Novarum and suggested that "the sort of socialism condemned in Rerum Novarum was Continental Communism, not the ameliorative movement which went by the name of socialism in England."<sup>102</sup>

Influential English Church leaders were strongly influenced either by it or by its successor, the Christian Social Union. Stewart Headlam came to believe that "it was a Christian duty to work for such things as land nationalization, a progressive income tax, universal suffrage and the abolition of a hereditary House of Lords."<sup>103</sup>

"The contributors to the volume of theological essays known as Lux

<sup>101</sup> "A reform, it has been said, is a correction of abuses; a revolution is a transfer of power". A.R. Vidler, Church in an Age of Revolution, p. 14.

<sup>102</sup> Inglis, op. cit., p. 316. However, as late as 1931 Pius XI: "Religious socialism, Christian socialism are contradictory terms; no one can be at the same time a good Catholic and a true Socialist." Quadragesimo Anno, para. 120.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., p. 272.

Mundi in 1889 were all more or less socialistic at heart and intended that the book should help to justify Christian Socialism to the thinking public."<sup>104</sup> Even the great New Testament scholar, B.F. Westcott, later Bishop of Durham, was moved to address the 1896 Church Congress in these words: "Individualism and socialism correspond with opposite views of humanity. Individualism regards humanity as disconnected and warring atoms. Socialism regards it as an organic whole. . . the method of Socialism is co-operation; the method of individualism is competition. . . The aim of Socialism is fulfilment of service; the aim of Individualism is the attainment of some personal advantage."<sup>105</sup>

In 1907 the redoubtable liturgical authority, Percy Dearmer, wrote, "If you are a Christian, and love your rich neighbour as yourself, you will do all you can to help him to become poorer."<sup>106</sup> Some observers at the 1908 Lambeth Conference of Anglican bishops were amazed by its ready support of "socialist" ideas: "This Conference recognizes the ideals of brotherhood which underlie the democratic movements of this country."<sup>107</sup>

All this was rich in compassion but weak in theological and political analysis. The movement left the structure of power untouched..

<sup>104</sup> J.R.H. Moorman, History of the Church in England. (London 1961) p. 392.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p. 393.

<sup>106</sup> Socialism and Christianity (1907) Cited by Inglis, op. cit., p. 279.

<sup>107</sup> Moorman, op. cit., p. 393.



It was not at all untoward for a peer to remark "We are all Socialists now,"<sup>108</sup> so that the shallowness of its impact perhaps justifies the scorn of Karl Marx. "Nothing is easier than to give Christian asceticism a Socialist tinge. . . Christian Socialism is but the holy water with which the priest consecrates the heart-burnings of the aristocrat."<sup>109</sup> It is true that the movement failed to produce any serious change in the upper and middle-classes of church-going English people, just as it failed to assure the working classes that the main body of the churches were anything but compromised by the structures under which they themselves suffered.

A man who was greatly influenced by the Christian Socialist movement, a contributor to Lux Mundi and one who was to move close to the centre of the English power structure was William Temple, successively Archbishop of York and Archbishop of Canterbury. Writing and speaking as a conscious heir to this recent tradition, he was consistently criticized by those who resented "the claim of the Christian Church to make its voice heard in matters of politics and economics. . . When a group of Bishops attempted to bring Government, coal owners and miners together in a solution of the disastrous Coal Strike of 1926, Mr. Baldwin, then Prime Minister, asked how the

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<sup>108</sup> Remark by Sir William Harcourt (1908), Oxford Dictionary of Quotations.

<sup>109</sup> The Communist Manifesto, Pt. 3, i (a). (London, 1967), p. 108.

Bishops would like it if he referred to the Iron and Steel Federation the revision of the Athanasian Creed."<sup>110</sup> It is a matter of historical record, and one that should be noted by critics of the Church, that attempts have been made in the past to temper the wind to the shorn economic lamb. Much earlier in our revolutionary era Church leaders were beginning to meet with the political facts of life. Temple writes, "If we belong to the Church, we are obliged to ask concerning every field of human activity what is the purpose of God for it. If we find this purpose it will be the true and proper nature of that activity, and the relation of the various activities to one another in the divine purpose will be the 'Natural Order' for those activities. To bring them into that Order, if they have departed from it, must be one part of the task of the Church as the Body of Christ. . . . It is bound to 'interfere' because it is by vocation the agent of God's purpose, outside the scope of which no human interest or activity can fall."<sup>111</sup> He goes a step beyond Maurice's Divine Order, almost to the activism of Ludlow. To those acclimatized to pluralism, it is strange to hear the Church's right to "interfere" stated so firmly. Yet it is not far in intention from the recently enunciated political theology of J.B. Metz, a German Catholic scholar, about which we shall hear more in the next chapter, which "has nothing to do with a reactionary mixture of

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<sup>110</sup>W. Temple, Christianity and the Social Order. (London, 1956).  
p. 13.

<sup>111</sup>Op. cit., p. 25.

faith and politics, but . . . has everything to do with the unfolding of the socio-political potentiality of this faith."<sup>112</sup>

The separation of Church and State, a principle so dear of course to both secularists and Christians of North America, was unknown to members of the English established Church. Some, including Temple himself, were uneasy that it was the very establishment of the Anglican Church that prevented her leaders from exercising the prophetic role that they obviously had accepted as theirs.<sup>113</sup> On the other hand, the sacrosanct tradition of the American separation-theory has also militated against a prophetic role. In recent social unrest, churches have been reminded to remain behind their "religious" and therefore "non-political" bounds.<sup>114</sup> Neither the tradition of establishment nor the tradition of separation which have appeared in opposition throughout this chapter has equipped Christians to do what must now be done: to tackle the political question.

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<sup>112</sup> J.B. Metz, Faith and the World of Politics Concilium XXXVI, p. 7.

<sup>113</sup> There was always the feeling that in the long run the nation would listen to its established "conscience". Until that happy repentance, the "principalities and powers" were content to have a Church that would reason and not wrestle. "As a matter of history it (the Church of England) has always aspired to be the church of the whole English people 'whether they will hear or whether they will forbear'." A.R. Vidler, Soundings, (Cambridge, 1966) p. 258.

<sup>114</sup> E. Schillebeeckx, God, the Future of Man, p. 144. "Some feel that, although at long last Christianity has become non-political in the sense of having rid itself of ecclesiastical politics and, although the world's own secular character has been recognized and confirmed as such by the Christian faith, Council and Pope are, in a roundabout way, again 'dabbling in politics' and exceeding their competence."

III

THE POLITICAL QUESTION

Ἐπιτομὴ τῆς πολιτικῆς φιλοσοφίας

- Aristotle

1. A Theology of Politics.
2. The Christian - Marxist Dialogue.

A Theology of Politics

"The reason the Labour party had turned its back on the Church was because the Church had turned its back on them. (No. No.) They got respectable congregations on Sunday and preached to please respectability. (Gries of No. No.) They forgot the writhing and suffering masses of humanity outside the walls of their churches. (Voices, No. No.) In the slums of the cities men and women and children, made in the image of God, were being driven down to hell for all eternity, and they had no helping hand outstretched to them. It was a disgrace to the Christian ministry of England."<sup>1</sup> It was in these terms that the first Socialist Member of the British Parliament, Keir Hardie, addressed and denounced the Congregationalists' Union meeting in 1892. In spite of the protests against such a bitter indictment, then and now, it is generally true that the churches have viewed the fact of poverty - the so-called "social question" - only as an opportunity to exercise individual Christian charity, rather than as a sign of the "spiritual wickedness in high places" against which Christians are called to wrestle. (Eph. 6.2) Such eschatology as was involved was crudely compensatory: "Here comes Christianity, declaring the blessedness of poverty, of hunger, of thirst, of all the ills of life, as the instruments of perfection in this world, to be crowned by supreme

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<sup>1</sup> British Weekly (13 Oct., 1892), quoted by K.S. Inglis, op. cit., p. 297.

rewards in the world to come."<sup>2</sup> It is an indication of how much our theology has developed when we compare the last quotation, from the English Roman Catholic periodical Tablet, with another from the same source, dated May 15, 1968: "If people starve today, it is a decision made by human beings. It is not a necessity. A man can choose whether children die of hunger; he may, in spite of his religious protestations, still carry the brand of Cain."<sup>3</sup> It is safe to say that misery has always aroused Christian compassion,<sup>4</sup> and that compassion has never been enough; but where it was once devout to let the after-life compensate for human deficiencies, it is now the task of politically relevant action to complete the conversion begun by the moral and spiritual revolution of Jesus Christ.<sup>5</sup>

The facts concerning what Franz Fanon has called "the geography of hunger"<sup>6</sup> have been well documented. Statistics are tabulated in

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<sup>2</sup> Tablet (10 Jan., 1885), quoted by K.S. Inglis, op. cit., p. 313.

<sup>3</sup> Cited in Priorities, Appendix to the Report of the Canadian Conference on Church and Society, (Hamilton, 1969) p. 24. Hereafter referred to as CCCS. "Christian Conscience and Poverty".

<sup>4</sup> "... . the very sad spectacle of innumerable workers of many nations and entire continents, who receive salaries which subject them and their families to subhuman conditions of life. . ." John XXIII, Mater et Magistra, (Rome, 1961) para. 12.

<sup>5</sup> "From the doctrinal point of view, the Church knows that first, fundamental revolution which is called 'conversion', a complete return from sin to grace. . . It has a communal aspect laden with implications for all society." Letter by 16 Bishops of the Third World, New Blackfriars, (December, 1967). Also in New Theology No. 6, pp. 244-254. Also in The Christian - Marxist Dialogue, ed. P. Oestreicher, pp. 232-246.

<sup>6</sup> The Wretched of the Earth, (New York, 1965), p. 76.

the report of the Canadian Conference on Church and Society,<sup>7</sup> Montreal, 1968, and are given personal application by Harvey Cox: "The villager is lured into the city by its noise and neon while at the same time he is pushed out of the village by hunger cramps and empty pockets. When he arrives in the city, whether it be Rio de Janeiro, Leopoldville (now Kinshasa), or Bombay, he meets again the Janus face of metropolis. In Mexico City he gawks at the splendid new Reforma Boulevard; in Cairo he stands dazzled by the swank hotels along the Nile; in Tokyo he thrills to the pulsation of its electric night life. But he soon discovers that these glittering symbols of freedom and abundance were not fashioned for him. Disillusioned and embittered, he eventually finds his way to the favela, the bidonville, tar-paper shantytowns where the world's urban poor huddle together to glare at the affluent world around them and to gnaw on the bones of discontent."<sup>8</sup> Guzman describes both the poverty and the inequity of the Colombian economic scene, against which Camilo Torres adopted a militant protest,<sup>9</sup> and most thoughtful people have heeded the warning given by Fanon: "What counts today, the question which is looming on the horizon is the need for a re-distribution of wealth. Humanity must reply to this question, or be shaken to pieces by it."<sup>10</sup>

In the face of the problem of world poverty, both the Roman

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<sup>7</sup> CCCS, pp. 21-30.

<sup>8</sup> On Not Leaving it to the Snake, p. 98.

<sup>9</sup> G. Guzman, op. cit., pp. 45-51.

<sup>10</sup> Op. cit., p. 77.

Catholic Church and the members of the World Council of Churches have, in some official statements, drawn close to an understanding if not an adoption of the radical response. John XXIII spoke of those who "on finding situations where the requirements of justice are not satisfied or not satisfied in full. . . wished to have recourse to something like revolution" and referred to them as "souls particularly endowed with generosity."<sup>11</sup> In the Medellin Statement of the Roman Catholic Bishops of Latin America, they remarked, "It is not surprising that violence is taking root. . . What is really more surprising is the patience of a people who have for many years borne a condition which would have been less easily tolerated given a greater awareness of the rights of man."<sup>12</sup> At Uppsala, the fourth Assembly of the World Council of Churches urged its members, in the cause of world development, "to take an open and public position calling on their communities to realize the need for revolutionary change."<sup>13</sup> Closer examination, however, reveals the historic and persistent tension between the conservatives and radicals in terms of active Christian social involvement. It is clear that the dividing line does not now run between confessional traditions, but between members of the same churches and denominations.

For example, in a recent survey of the Latin American scene,<sup>14</sup> a

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<sup>11</sup> Pacem in Terris, (Rome, 1963), pt. V.

<sup>12</sup> New Blackfriars, (November, 1968) Vol. 50, 582, pp. 72-78.

<sup>13</sup> The Uppsala 68 Report, p. 53.

<sup>14</sup> Alexander Craig, "Parishes and Revolution", loc. cit., (March, 1969). Helder Camara is Bishop of Recife, Brazil, one of the signatories of the "letter of Bishops of the Third World" and one of the participants in the Canadian Conference on Church and Society.



columnist in New Christian, an English periodical, wrote "It has to be emphasised that there is great opposition to Helder Camara and the progressive priests, especially at the higher levels. . ." and cites "a letter to the Pope, urging him to rid the church of the 'dangerous, left-wing bishops, priests and laymen'." Also, beneath the surface unanimity of the official Uppsala report, Paul Oestreicher noted the divergent groups whose views on "morally binding and politically effective ways" of expressing Christian insight could scarcely be reconciled.<sup>15</sup> Cox notes how the "poverty question" is perceived:<sup>16</sup>

"Should the Church remain largely as one of the 'helping agencies' and thereby continue its traditional social-service view of poverty? Should it cast its lot with non-governmental organizers, such as Saul Alinsky, investing money, staff and prestige in building political power for the poor?" In his view, there are three groups within the churches, each giving a different answer. "One group simply wants the Church to 'stay out of politics'. It includes people who hold that religion should focus on a world beyond this one." Another group is of "the churchgoing Bourbons. . . They are not against the Church becoming involved in controversial issues, so long as it always upholds the conservative side." Then there is the "New Breed" who, standing in the tradition of earlier Christian social activists, are not as "new" as all that. What is new on the theological scene, new

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<sup>15</sup> Uppsala 68 Report, p. 71.

<sup>16</sup> Op. cit., pp. 121-122.

at least in emphasis,<sup>17</sup> is the inclusion of the "world" within the realm of soteriology, the recognition therefore of poverty as one aspect of the slavery that contradicts the eschatological goal of the "glorious liberty of the children of God" (Romans 8. 21), and of politics as more than just the context of an individual conversion.

"The very upheaval that is going on at the moment raises the question of the future of man on earth. And yet there is nothing being published to give a constructive, dynamically Christian interpretation of what is happening."<sup>18</sup> Since the death of Teilhard de Chardin, the world situation has put in question even more "the future of man on earth" and has forced upon the Christian community the "political theology" of which Fr. Metz is the leading spokesman. Salvation has been for so long a private affair. "The primary conception of religion in modern society assigns to religion the saving and preserving of personal, individual and private humanity."<sup>19</sup> As a result of the Cartesian bifurcation of reality, the care for the public and political aspects of existence have been left to the "objective" sciences. But "existence today is closely intertwined

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<sup>17</sup> "The new emphasis on the social, economic and political that Uppsala presses on the churches is not new in the sense of being novel. . . but rather in the sense of renewal in the life of the churches of the most ancient truths of the Christian faith." Dr. Eugene Carson Blake. Uppsala 68 Report, "Report of the Secretary General". p. 287.

<sup>18</sup> Teilhard de Chardin, Letters from a Traveller, p. 232.

<sup>19</sup> J. Moltmann, Theology of Hope, p. 311.

with the vicissitudes of society, and every existentialist and personalist theology that does not understand existence itself as a political problem remains an abstraction insofar as the existential situation of the individual is concerned."<sup>20</sup> Such a theology, in other words, isn't even true to the individual on whom it seeks to focus its attention.

However, and this needs to be acknowledged by those who press the objections to a theology of revolution<sup>21</sup> mentioned before, this personalist-individualist tradition of theology was very acceptable to those in authority who were then free from any "religious" interference. Brian Wicker has given an important analysis of the history of the pattern of accommodation by the churches that is certainly consistent with our review of the previous chapter: "The only difference (between Protestant and Catholic) was that, in the catholic [sic] tradition the accommodation took the form of an ecclesiastical identification with feudal political and social institutions, while in the puritan tradition it took the form of a positive endorsement of, and furtherance of, the capitalist transformation of those institutions."<sup>22</sup> This, surely, is the answer to "the accusation that Christians of the theological and political left have sold out to the values and beliefs of the 'world', that they are 'kneeling before the world' to use

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<sup>20</sup> J.B. Metz, Faith and the World of Politics, Concilium XXXVI, p. 5. Emphasis mine.

<sup>21</sup> See above: Chapter 1, p. 7.

<sup>22</sup> From Culture to Revolution, "Eschatology and Politics", p. 263.

Jacques Maritain's striking phrase."<sup>23</sup>

"Kneeling before the world" is difficult to combine with a stance of independent and prophetic criticism, and is in fact a charge more easily levelled at those who insist on "political neutrality" for the churches. "Politics does not allow for a vacuum. When the question is put and the test is made, silence - with the rarest of exceptions - is itself the taking of a stand. The large, conservative 'a-political' church bodies and congregations know this, and so do the conservative and other interests of the country, and both profit from the alliance."<sup>24</sup>

Helmut Thielicke recognizes this pattern, and yet calls for a certain Christian political detachment. "Many positions adopted by the Church in the political sphere or in relation to the social question have been more or less unconsciously determined by categories and evaluations to which the Church was driven by this involvement in the social situation, or better, to which it has succumbed in

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., Introduction, p. 9.

<sup>24</sup> Martin E. Marty, The Search for a Usable Future, p. 120. Also, "Churches have too often attached themselves to the status quo, resenting and often resisting change. Sometimes they have simply yielded to the temptation of cherishing the social structures in which they have found a comfortable home, failing to see the needs of the present and the future. Sometimes they have fallen into the theological error of identifying existing structures with the eternal order, thus overlooking the dynamic character of God as revealed in Scripture. Sometimes they have feared controversy that might divide a church, preferring a false unity that rested on silence and evasion." WCCS, (Sect. 2, pt. v.) p. 111.

consequence of this involvement."<sup>25</sup> However, he adds, "The Church cannot. . . itself engage in politics".<sup>26</sup> Perhaps this can be interpreted to mean the avoidance of triumphalist ecclesiastical politics, but it can so easily be heard as "the apathetic avoidance of politics" which Cox condemns as "the sophisticated way in which we, like Cain, club our brothers to death."<sup>27</sup>

Thielicke does speak of "the duty of speaking to both sides", as though the Church stood on some vantage point and was able to speak to the political conflict with transcendent impartiality. However, he rather spoils his presentation, which is at least arguable, with the exception of the totalitarian state which is "always an ideological state" and therefore "the Church confesses its faith over against the ideological confession of the totalitarian state."<sup>28</sup>

It is because every state is ideological that the churches have to walk the razor's edge between acceptance and rejection without the benefit of pat formulas. If the past role of institutional accommodation has taught the churches to suspect the offer of social and political partnership, it is all the more incumbent upon them to examine the implications of political neutrality particularly in the light of

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<sup>25</sup> Theological Ethics, (Philadelphia, 1969) II, p. 625.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 631.

<sup>27</sup> H. Cox, God's Revolution and Man's Responsibility, p. 48. Also, On Not Leaving it to the Snake, p. xix. The duplicate references which are noticeable in this thesis must be taken as an indication of the publishers' awareness of the contemporary concern for either a "politics with a meaning" or a "theology with a relevance" or both.

<sup>28</sup> Op. cit., p. 637.

Thielicke's reservations as to the ideological states. Only we must ask the question that Thielicke fails to ask: what state is not ideological? From feudal to capitalist, from nationalist to socialist, every state needs to be accepted (but not to the point of accommodation) and to be judged (but not to the point of rejection) by its indigenous Christian church.

In terms of judgement, William Stringfellow gives an exegesis of the "principalities and powers" against which the Christian wages war.<sup>29</sup> Ideologies are one aspect of their presence in our demythologized world, so are "images" and "institutions". An eloquent example by an American Christian is the "American way of life".<sup>30</sup> "The historic ideological realities in American history, those of capitalism and democracy, are now perhaps displaced by elementary nationalism." When I read much the same from the pen of Michael Novak<sup>31</sup> I find it hard to agree with Miss Arendt's statement that "America was spared the cheapest and most dangerous disguise the absolute ever assumed in the political realm, the disguise of the nation".<sup>32</sup>

The point of this discussion is to ask whether, in the context of American, Chinese or Cuban nationalism, the Church should "confess

<sup>29</sup> Free in Obedience, pp. 49-73.

<sup>30</sup> Stringfellow, op. cit., p. 58.

<sup>31</sup> A Theology for Radical Politics, p. 29: "The system under which America now lives is not divine; the 'American way of life' is an idol. In this sense, to be a Christian one must be critical of America."

<sup>32</sup> On Revolution, p. 195.

its faith over against the ideological confession" and thereby establish its credibility as the one disinterested enough "to speak to both sides". This seems to be a viable position, and then one should go on to answer the question: "Of WHAT does the Church speak when she speaks to both sides?"

But that is not the usual meaning of political neutrality.

"The proposition that the Church is, or ought to be, independent of politics. . . means that the Church cannot and should not align itself with any particular party. . . In actual practice, the context in which it has to be made today is such that, effectively, it amounts to a capitulation to the prevailing and limited notion of politics. And this means a capitulation to a concept that exists, in reality, not only to preserve the system, but also to prevent any fundamental change in the society as a whole."<sup>33</sup> Indeed, recent revolutionary experience has once again identified the agencies of the churches with the forces of reaction<sup>34</sup> and given extra point to the summary of

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<sup>33</sup> Brian Wicker, op. cit., p. 264. Also, cf. Peter Berger. "Under these circumstances, religion will be primarily conservative in character. . . Its ideal will be some sort of social harmony, the dimensions of which are already given in the status quo." Noise of Solemn Assemblies, p. 52.

<sup>34</sup> For example: "Even the most remote regions are teeming with Catholic Evangelical, Methodist and Seventh-Day Adventist missionaries. In a word, all these close-knit networks of control strengthen the national machinery of domination." Regis Debray, Revolution in the Revolution, (New York, 1967), p. 53. "The police forces and the missionaries co-ordinated their efforts in 1950-51 in order to make a suitable response to the enormous influx of young Kenyans." F. Fanon, op. cit., p. 103. Also: "In the Congo. . . resettlement camps were opened and put under the charge of evangelical missionaries, protected - of course - by the Belgian army." Ibid., p. 104.

Martin Marty: "The churches which would not speak up for an issue of change could be counted on by powerful forces as representatives of the status quo."<sup>35</sup> To summarize: a non-political existence is impossible for the individual believer or for the churches, and the so-called political neutrality of the latter is now being unmasked as simply their unwillingness to recognize or to reflect upon the consequences of their actual political existence.

The result has not only been moral compromise but also theological etiolation. "Religious existentialism was bound to deteriorate eventually into. . . its current phase, the maudlin celebration of the demise of the deity."<sup>36</sup> According to Cox, the common problem of both the "Live God" and the "Dead God" theologies is that "both are very 'religious' in the worst sense of the word, i.e., occult, apolitical and esoteric."<sup>37</sup> The relationship between "the living God" and an active faith is expressed by Oestreicher. "The God who, incarnate in his people, stands for a radical renewal of the world, is not dead. The God in whose name St. John proclaimed 'Behold, I make all things new' is a God of revolution. . . This is not to jump on any popular political bandwagon. This is not to equate the revolution of the Kingdom of God with any current radical political concept. . .

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<sup>35</sup> Martin Marty, op. cit., p. 23.

<sup>36</sup> On Not Leaving it to the Snake, p. 16.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 16.



It is to recognize that Christian action intends to change the world."<sup>38</sup>

"We need a prophecy, and therefore a theology that is political in this grandly inclusive sense, i.e., focusing on the polis, the milieu where man becomes man." Without it, we are left with a theology "preoccupied with religion. . . and that still exhibits insufficient interest in discerning the signs of the times - in revolution."<sup>39</sup>

Perhaps nowhere in the world are the political realities being recognized by the Church as clearly as in Latin America. "The Christian Church in Latin America faces a challenging and difficult new period. Political and social change oblige it - whether it wants to or not - to revise its theology, its structure and the form of its presence."<sup>40</sup> It is exactly this process of revision that we see being carried out - so dramatically that one observer asks, "Has the Church opted for Revolution?"<sup>41</sup>

In August, 1967, the already-quoted letter of the Bishops of the Third World appeared, among whose signatories the largest group was

<sup>38</sup> The Christian Marxist Dialogue, (New York, 1969), p. 5.

<sup>39</sup> H. Cox, op. cit., p. 16.

<sup>40</sup> Mauricio Lopez, "Political Dynamics of Latin America" in The Church Amid Revolution, ed. H. Cox, (New York, 1967), p. 146.

<sup>41</sup> José de Broucker, "Has the Church Opted for Revolution?", New Blackfriars, (July, 1968), Vol. 49; 578, pp. 540-543.

Latin American. The letter identified the peoples of the Third World as "the proletariat of mankind today"<sup>42</sup> and quoted the intervention of Patriarch Maximos IV during Vatican II to the effect that "true socialism is Christianity completely practised in the just sharing of goods and fundamental equality." An even more startling revision is indicated in the following: "Certainly some rich nations or some rich of the nations give considerable aid to our peoples, but it would be illusory to wait passively for the free conversion of all those about whom our Father Abraham warned: 'They will not be convinced even if someone should rise from the dead'."<sup>43</sup>

Father Camilo Torres had been one who was not content to wait passively. His brief and tempestuous career of protest against the exploitation of Latin America ended in February, 1966, when he was shot and killed in a guerrilla action. His endorsement of violent revolution has been rejected by many: Bishop Camara himself said in Canada, "Call me idealistic if you will. But I believe in the power of truth, justice and love more than in the power of lies, injustice and hate."<sup>44</sup> Guzman hails the example of Camilo Torres and others like him as the prototype "for a new Christianity. We can disagree with their methods. . . but no one can deny that they are the purest,

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<sup>42</sup> Para. 2, cited in Christian Marxist Dialogue, p. 233.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., para. 18. (Op. cit., p. 242.)

<sup>44</sup> CCCS, p. 12.

the most noble, the most authentic exponents and martyrs of the new Christianity, and that Christ is not of the past but of the future." This claim,<sup>45</sup> of course, CAN be denied, "remembering that the difference between a saint and a destructive revolutionary is not easy to discern, especially by representatives of any establishment."<sup>46</sup> The point in this discussion, however, is not "whether. . . some guerrilleros and others may well become some of the secular saints and heroes of tomorrow"<sup>47</sup> but that the men whose title is under dispute are appearing in Latin America.<sup>48</sup> It is hard to find anywhere else in the Christian world similar examples of tough, dedicated and ascetic visionaries among Cox's "New Breed."

In October, 1967, three hundred Brazilian priests published a letter of protest in which they described their country as "a murdered people. . . . If murder is a crime, is it not also a crime to allow millions to perish?"<sup>49</sup> In January, 1968, another three hundred priests declared their support for the Bishops' Letter. The conservative caution of Torres' superiors in Colombia has been countered by such hierarchical statements as "I support the courage of Cuba and I

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<sup>45</sup> Camilo Torres, p. 288.

<sup>46</sup> Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, Uppsala 68 Report, p. 292.

<sup>47</sup> Orlando Fals Borda "The Significance of Guerrilla Movements in Latin America", Cross Currents, (Fall, 1968), Vol. XVIII, No. 4, p. 458.

<sup>48</sup> It is worth noting in this connection that the most articulate U.S. spokesman for a theology of revolution is Prof. Richard Shaull of Princeton Theological Seminary. Dr. Shaull worked for many years in Colombia and Brazil.

<sup>49</sup> José de Broucker, loc. cit., p. 541

beg God to give me the courage to imitate it." (Dom Fragos, Bishop of Cratens). "Armed revolution by the people is justified when oppression rules and famine wages obtain". (Dom Jorge, Bishop of Santo Andrés).

The encyclical Populorum Progressio of Pope Paul VI has been variously interpreted. For some it is a restraint to violence. "When entire populations, deprived of the necessities of life, live in dependence. . . the temptation to remove such insults to human dignity by violence is great. We know however, that revolutionary insurrection. . . engenders new injustices".<sup>50</sup> I left out the exceptive clause, which gave moderate encouragement to others who see the need for less passive attitudes: "Except in the case of manifest and prolonged tyranny that attacks fundamental rights of the person and endangers the common good of the country."

It was immediately before the visit of the Pope to Bogota, Colombia, in August, 1968, that 113 bishops of Latin America issued the Medellin Statement. It pointed out some home-truths. "A tiny minority receives the greater part of the income."<sup>51</sup> "The Latin American who has endured poverty in silence for so long is suddenly waking up and his demands outstrip the rhythm of development. What used to be unconscious poverty has become conscious misery. In this way a sense of frustration is born parallel with these new and

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<sup>50</sup> Populorum Progressio, (Rome, 1967), para. 31.

<sup>51</sup> Loc. cit., p. 73.

unsatisfied desires, and this is often the basis of a revolutionary movement."<sup>52</sup> The focus on the "social question" contained in the Statement is of a piece with the new revolutionary consciousness reported by Earl M. Smith. "Many Catholic priests and Protestant ministers are preaching revolution as God's command on behalf of the poor. . . . Several theologies of revolution are being developed. . . ."<sup>53</sup> In the same article he notes an ecumenical by-product. "All over Latin America it has brought Catholics and Protestants together in revolution on behalf of the oppressed and dispossessed 'for whom Christ died'." If it has united different denominations, revolution is still a divisive subject among Christians as to method. "We already have a theology of revolution, thanks to the encyclical Populorum Progressio, understanding by revolution the search for rapid and radical changes in economic and social structures."

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 77.

<sup>53</sup> "The Latin American Revolution", Christian Century (May 14, 1969) Vol. 86, No. 20, p. 676. In articulating the mood of the exploited majority, these Bishops and clergy are fulfilling the first of the "conditions necessary for revolution" discerned by Karl Marx. 1. There must be a particular section of society to embody the desires, aspirations and enthusiasm of the whole of society. 2. There must be another class which can be seen not only as dominant but as holding within itself all the causes of the misery and oppression of the remainder. 3. There must be a particular area of social activity which is seen as the "notorious crime" of that society. 4. The rebellious class, mentioned in the first condition, must see itself and be seen as emancipating the whole of society. The historical and theological consequences will be dramatic if Churchmen in Latin America provide the kind of leadership envisaged by Marx for members of the Communist Party. See From Culture to Revolution, p. 255, for a summary of the above-mentioned conditions.

This remark is attributed by José de Broucker in his article to Mgr. McGrath, Bishop of Panama, who continues, "But what we need now is a theology of violence, which would discriminate between what is legitimate and what is not."<sup>54</sup>

The situation in Latin America has direct consequences for the Christians of North America. Already the Canadian Oblate Fathers have submitted to the Canadian Government their recommendation that Canada should not join the Organization of American States.<sup>55</sup> Both the recommendation and the reasons for it indicate a recognition of the political nature of Christian existence. Given a coherent and accepted theology of revolution, this awareness would have ecumenical application. For example, at the Toronto Congress of the Anglican Communion, participating churches were asked to look upon South America as a potential mission field.<sup>56</sup> The policy called for a concern for the spiritual welfare of millions of Latin Americans, whose numbers exceed the resources of the Roman Catholic Church alone, but it would need careful examination and implementation. Nothing could be more disastrous, for Christianity or Latin America, than for a Christian "mission" to be extended that would express the attitudes towards revolution currently prevailing among the majority of

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<sup>54</sup> Loc. cit., p. 543. Mgr. McGrath was one of the pioneers of Schema XIII of Vatican II.

<sup>55</sup> Submitted in January, 1970, and it received editorial comment in Toronto's Globe and Mail, January 17, 1970.

<sup>56</sup> Anglican Congress 1963, Official Report (Toronto, 1963) p. 230.

Christians. Well-intentioned actions by Canadian Anglicans or American Episcopalians could be unconsciously accommodating to the interests of foreign-based corporations, and even be deliberately exploited in order to discourage legitimate revolutionary moods from any Christian expression.

The Christian - Marxist Dialogue

"The Master is all but professing Communism (literally Communism) with a boldness and vigour quite amazing. . ."

Ludlow expressed his surprise in a letter to Charles Kingsley concerning F.D. Maurice.<sup>57</sup> The latter's views must have appeared as either blasphemy or inanity to his Continental colleagues, now that the "liberal" period of Pius IX was over. The general recognition of any affinity whatsoever between Christianity and Communism did not become possible until this century." After a century of enmity, estrangement and mutual hatred and mischief," remarks Leslie Dewart, "the first item of discussion must be the desirability. . . of Marxist - Christian intercourse."<sup>58</sup> How is it now possible for either Christians or Marxists to enter into conversation without "the conscious or unconscious admission that the truth of one's own belief is either partial or reformable in those very respects in which it is contradicted by the opposite side?"<sup>59</sup> In particular, it

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<sup>57</sup> K. S. Inglis, op. cit., p. 105, Maurice was then expressing his view that "the idea of Christian Communism has been a most vigorous and generative one in all ages, and must be destined to a full development in ours."

<sup>58</sup> Forward to R. Garaudy, From Anathema to Dialogue, p. 5. The book is based on material first delivered at St. Michael's College, Toronto, in 1965. Dewart's thought-provoking The Future of Belief (New York, 1966) responds to issues raised by Garaudy.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 11.



seemed as though Roman Catholics had little to discuss. Pius XI denounced "bolshevistic and atheistic communism, which aims at upsetting the social order and at undermining the very foundations of Christian civilization. . . A system of errors and sophisms. . . in opposition to both reason and divine Revelation. . . it denies the rights, dignity and liberty of human personality."<sup>60</sup> Obvious incentives for mutual awareness have since prevailed over many such objections, but more significant than the external pressures have been the consequent insights. "I take it as established that a serious conversation between Marxists and Christians is not only worth sustaining because it is better to exchange diagnoses than missiles, but because we have come to feel that there is a good deal more to give and take among us than our anathemas had allowed us to dream of."<sup>61</sup> The last decade has seen Christian and Marxist intellectuals in consultation,<sup>62</sup> in France, 1964, in Canada, 1965, in Germany, 1965, in Czechoslovakia, 1967, and in Italy, 1965.<sup>63</sup> At the Salzburg Colloquy in 1965, organized by the Paulus Gesellschaft, a Catholic student group, a participating theologian, J.B. Metz, asked, "Will man, when fully developed, be still more

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<sup>60</sup> Divini Redemptoris (Rome, 1937), para. 3.

<sup>61</sup> Walter Stein, "Mercy and Revolution" From Culture to Revolution, p. 223.

<sup>62</sup> David McLellan, "Christian - Marxist Dialogue", New Blackfriars, (June, 1968), Vol. XLIX, 577; pp. 462-467.

<sup>63</sup> H. Cox, On Not Leaving it to the Snake, p. 55. See also The Christian - Marxist Dialogue, ed. P. Oestreicher, (New York, 1969).

the questioner?"<sup>64</sup> Another theologian, who also attended and whose work we have already noted, G. Girardi, has since sought to show in his book Marxismo e Cristianesimo (Assisi, 1966), that genuine dialogue with Marxism is doctrinally and ethically possible. "For Fr. Girardi, the basic issue is whether or not Marxism recognizes the individual person as of value in himself."<sup>65</sup> It is the emphasis on man that is the key to the discussion for Roger Garaudy, a French Marxist, also present at Salzburg and author of From Anathema to Dialogue. The basic Christian message as he understands it, gives "a new status for man. . . . For man to exist has now become liberation from his nature and from his past, by the divine grace revealed in Christ, liberation for a life which consists in free decisions."<sup>66</sup> Marxists must concede what they owe "to Christianity, as a religion of the absolute future, and as a contributing factor in the exploration of the two essential dimensions of man: subjectivity and transcendence."<sup>67</sup>

For Christians, one result of these exchanges has been a sharpening of their political focus, doing justice not only to man as an individual but as a social being. Ernst Bloch, the elderly German

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<sup>64</sup> From Anathema to Dialogue, p. 60. For Metz's complete contribution see "Creative Hope", Cross Currents, (Spring, 1967), Vol. XVII, pp. 171-179.

<sup>65</sup> A review by Colin Hamer, S.D.B., New Blackfriars, (Dec., 1967), Vol. XLIX, No. 571, pp. 133-139.

<sup>66</sup> Op. cit., p. 57.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 112.

Marxist whose Das Prinzip Hoffnung (Berlin, 1953-6), has attracted many of the younger theologians, "challenges Christianity to work out a genuine social-political ethic that achieves men's hopes in this world."<sup>68</sup> While Bloch as a Marxist "believes that Christianity's great gift was to introduce the 'principle of hope' into the world, that is, a way of seeing things from the future, what they could become",<sup>69</sup> it is a Christian who declares that "In view of the misuse of religion in the course of history, Marxism has solid grounds for its atheism."<sup>70</sup> Prof. Lochman continues, "Dedication to the great task of revolutionary refashioning of this world must not be 'watered down' with 'pious reasons'." Such a watering down, in the view of Jürgen Moltman, himself strongly influenced by Bloch, is the "existential decision of faith" that "threatens to become a religious ideology of romanticist subjectivity, a religion within the sphere of the individuality that has been relieved of all social obligations."<sup>71</sup>

However, while Bloch may be right that "Christianity kindled a revolution which, instead of devouring its children, disavowed

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<sup>68</sup> K. Heinitz, "A Theology of Hope According to Ernst Bloch", Dialogue, (Winter, 1968), Vol. VII.

<sup>69</sup> H. Cox, "Ernst Bloch and 'The Pull of the Future'", New Theology No. 5, p. 198. See also "The Principle and Theology of Hope" by G. O'Collins, Scottish Journal of Theology (1968) Vol. XXI, pp. 129-144.

<sup>70</sup> J.M. Lochman, "Christianity and Marxism: Convergence and Divergence", Christianity and Crisis, (May, 1969) Vol. XXIX, No. 8. pp. 131-133.

<sup>71</sup> Theology of Hope, p. 316.

them",<sup>72</sup> Marxism has also experienced the process of accommodation, from the 1917 October Revolution, "the greatest spiritual event of our century",<sup>73</sup> into the bureaucratic institution of Soviet Communism. "Lenin's ideas have been devoured by time and the betrayal of his successors - Stalin, Khrushchev and Brezhnev. In fighting for their own survival and that of the party bureaucracy, they even managed to convert Lenin's mausoleum into a shrine of power and authority, and his body into the relics of a Russian Orthodox saint."<sup>74</sup>

Indeed, at the Nineteenth Congress of the French Communist Party at Nanterre in February, 1970, Roger Garaudy was himself suspended from membership of the Central Committee for his criticism of the Russian repression of Czechoslovakia in 1968. Although it may be true that "Marxism happens to be currently one of the more promising talking points that Christian theology has with the non-Christian culture of the contemporary world"<sup>75</sup> this may not say much for either movement. The present dialogue could merely be the drawing together for comfort of two élites, the largely ignored theoreticians. Heavily institutionalized, both movements have theoretical bases that are at a discount in the pragmatic, management leadership of either

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<sup>72</sup> H. Cox, loc. cit., p. 198.

<sup>73</sup> R. Garaudy, op. cit., p. 82.

<sup>74</sup> Milovan Djilas, "How History has made Lenin a Tragic Figure", The Globe and Mail, Toronto, Jan. 6, 1970.

<sup>75</sup> K. Heinitz, loc. cit.

Moscow or Washington. In any case, mutual explanations are hardly sufficient between ideologies that are precisely not content with explanations but with transformations.<sup>76</sup> Pluralism and secularism have diminished the authority of both Marxist and Christian dogma, with a significant consequence. For either one, the other has ceased to be the arch-enemy. This change allows a more objective evaluation and appreciation to be conducted by both parties and for Christians particularly it allows the freedom to accept correction from Marxism as to their own revolutionary origins,<sup>77</sup> to provide correction to Marxism,<sup>78</sup> and to press for a renewal of the earth as the expression of its eschatological goal. That Christians have learned to recognize the dangers of passivity and fatalism in their eschatological hopes is best expressed in the words of Leslie Dewart. "Unless we make it, the Kingdom of God will never come."<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> "The theologian is not contented merely to supply different interpretations of the world, of history and of human nature, but to transform them in the expectation of a divine transformation." Moltmann, op. cit., p. 84. There is a conscious reference to the words of Marx: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world. . . The point, however, is to change it." Theses on Feuerbach, XI.

<sup>77</sup> R. Garaudy, op. cit., p. 56.

<sup>78</sup> "In the measure that Marxism believes that the earth can be enough for him, yes - it impoverishes man." Ibid., p. 93. Quoting Fr. Girardi at Salzburg.

<sup>79</sup> Quoted by Cox, On Not Leaving it to the Snake, p. 81.

#### IV

#### THE ISSUE OF VIOLENCE

"What is hateful is not rebellion, it is the despotism which induces that rebellion; what is hateful are not rebels, but the men who, having the engagement of power, do not discharge the duties of power: those men who, when they are asked for a loaf, give a stone." - Sir Wilfrid Laurier.

That the Issue of Violence is no academic debate has been underlined by the recent murder of a radical priest, and the response of his outraged colleagues. Fr. Antonio Henrique Pereira Neto was found hanging from a tree in the grounds of Recife University, Brazil, on the night of May 26-27, 1969. He had been strangled and shot, and suspicion immediately fell on a right-wing terrorist organization known as the "Anti-Communist Hunt Commandos." Police denied any indication of its having been a political murder, but the priest's own bishop, Helder Camara, let it be known that an assassination list existed which included the name of Fr. Neto and also his own name, to discourage further radical activity by Church leaders.

The response showed that the blood of the martyrs is still the seed of the Church, and also that resistance to oppression promises to be more than passive. A statement was issued by the priests of Rio de Janeiro and read from the pulpit at Sunday masses on June 8, 1969. "The progressive leaders within the Church are not persecuted for the fact that they are members of this religious body. They are persecuted because they seek to bring the Gospel to the poor. . . . Peace is the fruit of justice. In Brazil, where the minority rules all economic and political power, there is no justice, no peace. All possibility is gone of fulfilling the greatest command, "Love thy neighbour" and there remains only recourse to struggle in order to transform Brazilian society."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Herder Correspondence. (August, 1969) Vol. 6, No. 8. pp.244-246.

The World Conference on Church and Society, held in Geneva, 1966, called for "a theological understanding of revolution and especially the ethics of violent action".<sup>2</sup> Such a task has been attempted in recent years by two theologians, one French and the other American. In relation to the concept of Christian dissent, Daniel Stevick points to the historical development of the problem of legitimate violence.<sup>3</sup> From the time of the early Church, whose members were the passive recipients of violence, through the Constantinian period when imperial power was in the hands of a Christian, to the mediaeval concept of the "just war", the Christian community has agonized over the gap between the empirical realities of the present age and the eschatological insights of Micah and Isaiah.

"And they shall beat their swords into plowshares

And their spears into pruning hooks.

Nation shall not up sword against nation,

Neither shall they learn war anymore." (Isaiah 2, 4; Micah 4, 3)

The original pacifism of the Church, represented by St. Martin of Tours who left the Roman army on his conversion, was quickly modified so that at the time of the Diocletian persecutions, many soldiers were among the martyrs. Indeed, soldiers were often the lay missionaries of the new faith. Jacques Ellul reminds us that, under the tutelage of Aquinas, the "just war" concept required seven

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<sup>2</sup> WCCS, p. 119.

<sup>3</sup> Civil Disobedience and the Christian, pp. 34-55.



conditions: the cause must be just; the purpose of the combatant must be just during hostilities; war must be the last resort; the means of waging war must be just; the benefits of war must be greater than its evils; victory must be assured; the concluding peace must be just and of such a nature as to prevent a new war.<sup>4</sup>

It is interesting that a recent writer of the "Catholic Left" in England has expressed a renewed interest in "The traditional criteria of 'justifiable warfare' qualified by a much more emphatic and active recognition that violence can only barely be tolerated as a concession to present immaturities."<sup>5</sup> I shall return to this comment with its two-fold hope that violence can be contained and that it can ultimately be superceded. In his opposition to Christian participation in violence of any kind, Ellul argues that violence simply cannot be contained. "The first law of violence is continuity. Once you start using violence, you cannot get away from it. Violence expresses the habit of simplification. . . . Once a man has begun to use violence he will never stop using it, for it is so much easier and more practical than any other method."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Violence: Reflections from a Christian Perspective (New York, 1969) p. 6.

<sup>5</sup> Walter Stein, From Culture to Revolution. p. 243. The "Slant" group consists of young Catholic writers who, through their periodical Slant are "engaged in the exploration of the idea that Christian commitment carries with it an obligation to be Socialist." James Klugman, "The Pattern of Encounter in Britain", The Christian - Marxist Dialogue, p. 179.

<sup>6</sup> Op. cit., p. 94. He also quotes a Nazi "simplification": "When I come up against intellectuals who pose a problem, I kill the intellectuals; then there is no more problem." p. 61.

The other "laws of violence" follow: secondly, reciprocity. "Violence begets violence". On this point Ellul quotes the warning of Jesus, "All who take the sword will perish by the sword" (Matt. 26.52) and illustrates it. "The violence of the colonialists creates the violence of the anti-colonialists, which in turn exceeds that of the colonialists".<sup>7</sup> The third law is sameness. Every violence is identical with every other violence. Psychological violence is the same as physical; military violence is the same as economic violence; government violence is the same as guerrilla violence. From this it follows that "A government which maintains itself in power only by violence (economic, psychological, physical, military violence or just plain violence), absolutely cannot protest when guerrillas, revolutionaries, rioters, criminals attack it violently. . . . But the opposite also holds, namely, that the revolutionary or the rioter cannot protest when the government uses violence against him. To condone revolutionary violence is to condone the state's violence."<sup>8</sup> Here Ellul almost sounds like Luther in calling the princes to put down the Peasants' Revolt;<sup>9</sup> his reasoning, however, is different. Luther discriminated between legitimate and illegitimate violence, whereas Ellul finds such discrimination impossible for the Christian. In the same tenor, Prof. H.D. Wendland at Geneva's World Conference excluded

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 95.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 99.

<sup>9</sup> See above, p. 36.

the use of force "as a legitimate instrument which Christians could use for 'transforming the World'."<sup>10</sup> Although Stevick does not support this conclusion, he too says that "Violence seems inherently incompatible with self-giving love. It is an extension of self-will. It regards other persons and their ideas and feelings with contempt: it treats them as means. It brutalizes the users as they inflict harm on others".<sup>11</sup> Pope John XXIII issued the same warning in one of his encyclicals, quoting the words of his predecessor Pius XII: "Violence has always achieved only destruction, not construction; the kindling of passions, not their pacification; the accumulation of hate and ruin, not the reconciliation of contending parties. And it has reduced men and parties to the difficult task of rebuilding, after sad experience, on the ruins of discord."<sup>12</sup> Consent to the wisdom of these words is reinforced by the example of Jesus, who rejected a violent response to his arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane (Jn. 18.11), and "when he was reviled, reviled not again" (1 Peter 2, 23 K.J.V.).

It seems that informed Christian conscience, without accommodating to either persecution or privilege, is led in loyalty to Jesus Christ to a non-violent testimony. Certainly the Geneva Conference expressed such a sensitivity when it called also for "a study of non-violence and the new experience of non-violent action."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> WCCS, p. 24. Quoted by J.M. Lochman, New Theology No. 6, p. 111.

<sup>11</sup> Op. cit., p. 128.

<sup>12</sup> Pacem in Terris, Pt. V.

<sup>13</sup> Loc. cit., p. 119.

Two twentieth-century apostles of non-violence have consciously given the clue to their behaviour as the example and teachings of Jesus. Mahatma Gandhi, the Hindu leader of India's struggles for self-government, acknowledged his debt to Christianity. "The New Testament gave me comfort and boundless joy" was his witness in 1927<sup>14</sup> and only three days before his death by assassination in 1947, he was reported as confessing that his interpretation of the Bhagavad Gita was perhaps unduly influenced by the Sermon on the Mount.<sup>15</sup> In turn, Ellul calls on Christians to be influenced by Gandhi. "I would have all Christians take to heart this word of Gandhi's: 'Do not fear. He who fears, hates; he who hates, kills. Break your sword and throw it away and fear will not touch you. I have been delivered from desire and from fear so that I know the power of God'."<sup>16</sup>

What is unexpected from a Hindu comes less surprisingly from a Baptist minister. Martin Luther King is the other name most prominently associated with the program of non-violence to meet the needs of a revolutionary age. When his home was bombed during the Alabama bus boycott, King called for a response that was worthy of the name of Christ. "Jesus cries out in words that echo across the centuries: 'Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; pray for them that

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<sup>14</sup> Vincent Sheean, Lead Kindly Light (New York, 1949) p. 44. The title quotes the first line of Gandhi's favourite hymn by John Henry Newman.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>16</sup> Loc. cit., p. 173.

despitefully use you'. This is what we must live by. We must meet hate with love."<sup>17</sup>

Where, however, Ellul sees non-violence as the only genuinely Christian answer to violent provocation, Stevick questions its effectiveness in all situations. "The tactic of non-violence depends for its effectiveness on the presence of human sensitivity in the opponent."<sup>18</sup> "Success in non-violent protest also depends on certain psychological conditions not everywhere present."<sup>19</sup> In answer to the pacifist's objection that it is the principle of non-violence that counts, not its success, Stevick replies with some cogency that "a Christian is a follower of Jesus Christ, not Don Quixote. The aim is change."<sup>20</sup> Even Martin Luther King called for a modification of non-violence that was more clearly an application of force. "Non-violent protest must now mature to a new level to correspond with heightened black impatience and stiffened white resistance. This higher level is mass civil disobedience. There must be more than a statement to the larger society; there must be a force that interrupts its

<sup>17</sup> Stevick, op. cit., p. 123.

<sup>18</sup> Loc. cit., p. 131. Cf. "Peace through Revolution", The Social Message of the Gospels Concilium Vol. XXXV, pp. 149-178. An essay which is a moving plea for non-violent revolution in Latin America. The case is illustrated by a successful and non-violent strike in which the courage of the strikers who are prepared to die won over the sympathy of the police guarding the strike-bound plant.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 131.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 132.

functioning at some key point."<sup>21</sup>

Another recent writer goes further than Stevick, stating that non-violence needs the necessary counter-point of violence to achieve its goal. "Those officially committed to non-violence discovered that the way to win concessions was to point out to the colonial powers that their followers. . . were getting out of hand. When a new generation of Negro militants appeared to his (King's) left - Malcolm X, Rap Brown, Stokeley Carmichael - the authorities suddenly discovered King's value to them. . . Doors that King and his followers had knocked upon without success suddenly yielded to the hefty kick of Negro militancy."<sup>22</sup> Two features of Stevick's argument, in my view, destroy the case for non-violence as the only viable strategy for Christian action in our time. On the one hand the command of Jesus is not to resist evil (Mtt. 5, 39), whereas "modern Christian non-violent action is an aggressive tactic. It does not leave evil unopposed." On the other hand, "violence" is a morally ambiguous term. In total contradiction to Ellul, and in the tradition of the mediaeval theologians, Stevick claims that "the use of physical force need not in itself obscure or prejudice all moral distinctions."<sup>23</sup> These two points will occupy the rest of the discussion in this section.

"Christianity began in an act of violence, and its first act was

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<sup>21</sup> Martin Luther King Jr., Conscience for Change, p. 8. The 1967 Massey lectures over Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. (Toronto, 1967). Emphasis mine.

<sup>22</sup> Colin Morris, Unyoung, Uncoloured, Unpoor (London, 1969) p. 91.

<sup>23</sup> Op. cit., p. 128.

to show that violence, no matter what its sources, can be redemptive."<sup>24</sup> This is not the usual interpretation of the Crucifixion, but before we judge its suitability for the violence basic to the New Covenant, some consideration must be given to the violence which is basic to the Old. If the Hebrews' experience of Yahweh carries any weight at all with the Christian community, then it is simply not true that "all violence is the same."<sup>25</sup> The murder of Abel is an act of violence which is different from the violence with which the Exodus began and ended. When Deutero-Isaiah celebrated the redemption of Israel, he saw the hand of God in the violence that would bring an end to the Exile.<sup>26</sup> Christians have frequently winced at the aggressive gusto of the Psalms, but perhaps we have lost an appreciation of God's involvement in history by trying to "spiritualize" such a mandate as that contained in one of the Coronation psalms: "May he (the King) defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the needy and crush the oppressor." (Psalm 72, 4) R.S.V. Certainly it was in true Old Testament style that Cromwell interpreted military victory as a proof of God's favour,<sup>27</sup> and it wasn't until the Enlightenment that Voltaire's sardonic comment caused the Christians to

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<sup>24</sup> Michael Novak, Towards a Theology of Radical Politics, p. 77.

<sup>25</sup> See above, page 96.

<sup>26</sup> Isaiah 40 - 45.

<sup>27</sup> "God made them as stubble to our swords." In a letter after the Battle of Marston Moor, 1644.

abandon the battlefields entirely to the Devil.<sup>28</sup> Only in the sanctuary do we now hear the cry, "Lord of Hosts".

Perhaps it was the retreat of religion into the realm of the subjective that helped to bring about the more recent emphasis on the "Prince of Peace" role of Jesus, with less than adequate attention to the eschatological context of that title within its Old Testament setting. This emphasis has provoked two dissimilar reactions. The more common is that voiced by Steve Weissman: "Radical theology would do well to find better revolutionary leaders than Jesus. . . Like LSD Christ might have offered important pre-revolutionary insights, but opposition - political opposition - is what must be rendered to Caesar."<sup>29</sup> But Colin Morris, another recent writer, argues that Jesus did offer such opposition to Caesar. Interpreting Mark 12, 14: "One has only to ask: what in the eyes of a devout Jew legitimately belonged to Caesar? . . . The answer is nothing. . . If Mark is reporting a genuine saying of Jesus, the form of his answer might be ambiguous but its meaning, given the mood of the people, was clearly seditious. Jesus' answer seems to me to be fighting talk, and not a clever evasion of the issue."<sup>30</sup>

Again Weissman comments, "There is the Christian admonition to 'Love Thy Neighbour'. Christian theologians cannot easily ignore the

<sup>28</sup> "On dit que Dieu est toujours pour les gros bataillons." (1770).

<sup>29</sup> New Theology No. 5, pp. 41-42.

<sup>30</sup> Op. cit., p. 112.



the very rich concepts of harmony and peace among brothers found in the New Testament."<sup>31</sup> Indeed they cannot, and we saw in an earlier chapter<sup>32</sup> that it has been precisely this love-ethic that has spurred a rethinking of Christian response to the evil that destroys the neighbour.<sup>33</sup>

If this outlook seems to favour the "romanticizing of revolution" that the Geneva Conference declared to be "irresponsible"<sup>34</sup> it also commends the motivation for revolution which Hannah Arendt criticizes most strongly. We noted previously<sup>35</sup> that she deplored the concern with the social question that derives from compassion as having led to the world's most destructive and unfruitful revolutions. It is consistent with her thesis on the political irrelevance of compassion that Miss Arendt undertakes to discuss "the only completely valid, completely convincing experience Western mankind ever had with active love of goodness as the inspiring principle of all actions, that is, . . . the person of Jesus of Nazareth;"<sup>36</sup> and does so to

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<sup>31</sup> Loc. cit., p. 42.

<sup>32</sup> See above, p. 62.

<sup>33</sup> See above, p. 60.

<sup>34</sup> WCCS, p. 104.

<sup>35</sup> See above, p. 50.

<sup>36</sup> On Revolution, p. 76.

emphasize that "for the course of human affairs". . . "absolute goodness is hardly any less dangerous than absolute evil."<sup>37</sup>

It would be very far from Miss Arendt's intention to contribute towards a theology of revolution, but her discussion does, in fact, illustrate very well the arguments of those who see the influence of Christ's teaching in the shattering of political patterns. In drawing the analogy between Jesus and Melville's Billy Budd, Arendt remarks, "The greatness of this part of the story lies in that goodness, because it is part of 'nature', does not act meekly but asserts itself forcefully and, indeed, violently. . ."<sup>38</sup>

It is then, in her view, entirely possible that a devotion to moral goodness could upset or even destroy a political order with more relative goals. "The Absolute. . . spells doom to everyone when it is introduced into the political realm."<sup>39</sup> Does the doom of Camilo Torres validate her judgment? When he declared, "I believe I have given myself to the revolution out of love of my neighbour"<sup>40</sup> he was giving expression to the very kind of revolutionary and moral zeal that Arendt condemns as historically fruitless. "Since the days of the French Revolution, it has been the boundlessness of their sentiments that made revolutionaries so curiously insensitive to reality

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 77.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>39</sup> Op. cit., p. 79

<sup>40</sup> Camilo Torres, p. 292.

in general and to the reality of persons in particular."<sup>41</sup> Perhaps, as an historian, it may be said that Hannah Arendt favours reform more than revolution, and needs to re-classify the American Revolution as basically a bourgeois reform movement, but it is as theologians that many scholars today are trying to evaluate the highly motivated, moral energy that she prefers to dismiss. "As a rule, it is not compassion which sets out to change worldly conditions in order to ease human suffering, but if it does, it will shun the drawn-out wearisome processes of persuasion, negotiation and compromise, which are the processes of law and politics, and lend its voice to suffering itself, which must claim for swift and direct action, that is, for action with the means of violence."<sup>42</sup> She believes that Jesus personified that intensity of compassion which is creative only in a one-to-one relationship and which is simply not capable of being transferred to the political scene. Her argument is both echoed and answered in the words of an English writer. "Jesus, by the glaring inappropriateness of the revolutionary label that man cannot but pin on him, forces politics to declare itself at the top of its voice, saying: 'for the human thing to work, the human must be eliminated'. . . He makes the voice of the Establishment resound with its maximum lunacy."<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Op. cit., p. 85.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 82.

<sup>43</sup> Sebastian Moore No Exit (London, 1968) p. 120. Quoted by Walter Stein in From Culture to Revolution p. 243.

In place of this thesis of the non-transferability of the human factor from the individual relationship to the collective and political, a renewed theology is beginning - in spite of the attendant risks - to call for the humanizing and revolutionizing of politics as a corollary to the individual revolution of conversion. "Therefore, revolution is not only permitted, but obligatory for those Christians who see it as the only effective way of fulfilling love to one's neighbour."<sup>44</sup>

How did Jesus fulfill his own teaching? He did not join the Zealots, the political revolutionaries of his own day, although Morris finds it significant that Jesus opposed the Herodians, the Pharisees and the Sadducees - but did not criticize the Zealots.<sup>45</sup> He did not resist arrest, and yet two of his disciples were armed. "Gandhi would not permit a weapon in his sight, let alone allow his closest disciples to be armed."<sup>46</sup> Whatever Jesus meant by telling his followers not to resist evil, his meaning had to be consistent with his own opposition to the forces of spiritual blindness, his own forceful demonstration in the Temple or his command to one without a sword to "sell his cloak and buy one" (Lk. 22, 36.) It is clear that Jesus did challenge the authorities of his own day, as did the prophets in theirs, that this challenge

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<sup>44</sup> Gonzalo Catillo-Cardenas, addressing Geneva 1966. Quoted by J. M. Lochman, New Theology No. 6, p. 112.

<sup>45</sup> Loc. cit., p. 106.

<sup>46</sup> Colin Morris, op. cit., p. 118.

expressed his concern for man, and was capable of anger and violence. (Mk. 3,5; Jn. 2. 14-16) The record of the New Testament is of God's "Yes" to man, in the conception (Mtt. 1, 23), birth (Lk. 2, 14), life (2 Cor. 1, 20), death (Lk. 23, 34), resurrection (Rom. 6, 4) and ascension (Rev. 3, 14) of Jesus.

He was both the fulfilment of promise,<sup>47</sup> and also the renewal of promise. In Jesus we see the eschatological fulfilment of all creation (Eph. 1, 10), a promise to transcend the limitations of the present age by revealing them as birth-pains (Rom. 8, 22), groanings for the "not yet" liberated creation.<sup>48</sup> Since the liberation is promised and certain, however, can it be said that it is too negative a policy to resist the evil that delays its coming? Focus for the followers of Jesus must be on the Father whose will for the world they seek to express and obey, in the conviction that evil has been overcome.

This marks the difference between a revolution of hope and a revolution of despair. According to the different motivations, revolutionary action will be either creative or destructive, expressive either of life or death, of freedom or enslavement, of redemption or perdition. The measure of whether any revolutionary action is compatible with the Gospel is the degree to which it is redemptive.

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<sup>47</sup> G. Von Rad, Theology of the Old Testament, Vol. II (London, 1965) p. 383.

<sup>48</sup> J. Moltmann, Theology of Hope, p. 197.

Therefore the violence of an act is not the decisive criterion for Christian endorsement, but rather "whilst violence remains a dominant constituent of our world, around us and within us, there are uses of violence that need not be in vain."<sup>49</sup>

It is to these uses of violence that I must now turn. Stevick points out that there is an ambiguity to the word "violence", covering both the negative sense of destruction, and also the morally neutral sense of "strong force".<sup>50</sup> In the latter sense, it can be compared to the force inherent in the elemental energies of the created universe, to the "natural" violence mentioned by Hannah Arendt,<sup>51</sup> to the force of restraint against destructive violence, or even to the creative force of sexual energy. Most Christians readily recognize the case for legitimate violence in the defence of law and order, although I think that Martin Marty is too severe concerning the moral insensitivity of the average church-goer on this point. "In any Catholic or Protestant suburb, any superpatriot or militarist can count on the support of the vast majority of church-goers to go along with him in absolutely any kind of military engagement fought with absolutely any kind of means towards absolutely any kind of ends."<sup>52</sup>

History provides such instances as the "Peterloo Massacre" in

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<sup>49</sup> Walter Stein, loc. cit., p. 229.

<sup>50</sup> Op. cit., p. 129.

<sup>51</sup> See above, page 104.

<sup>52</sup> The Search For a Usable Future, p. 89.

Manchester, 1819, when cavalry charged into an unarmed, orderly crowd of cotton-mill workers; "Bloody Sunday" outside the Czar's Winter Palace at St. Petersburg in 1905; Main Street, Winnipeg, in 1919, and the 1960 Sharpeville massacre in South Africa. "Law and order" has been the justification for such violence, and it has satisfied most Churchmen. It is true that Christian sensitivity has increased: no Bishop raised his voice in protest over the Manchester incident in the way that Bishop Ambrose Reeves denounced Sharpeville.<sup>53</sup> It remains true, however, that most Western Christians are tacit supporters both of the invisible violence that victimizes the Third World,<sup>54</sup> and also the overt violence that is used occasionally to preserve the West-dominated economic system, such as the recent situations in Algeria and the Congo. Recent reports indicate that the churches have at last begun to re-evaluate this stance, and also to see the problem of violence as presented by those who also want to resist and restrain destructive violence - not in the name of "law and order" but in the name of revolution. "It may well be that the use of violent methods is the only recourse of those who wish to avoid prolongation of the vast, covert violence which the existing order involves."<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Ambrose Reeves, Shooting at Sharpeville. (London, 1960).

<sup>54</sup> See above, page 69.

<sup>55</sup> WCCS, p. 143. Also: "The use by Christians of revolutionary methods - by which is meant violent overthrow of an existing political order - cannot be excluded a priori." Ibid.

The Report of the Geneva Conference in 1966 was only the beginning of surprises for those who had assumed that the alliance between the Churches and the established order was unbreakable. The United States Conference on Church and Society, of the National Council of Churches, that followed in November, 1967, in Detroit, was a further jolt. "We find the question of Christian obedience is made especially agonizing because the Church itself is deeply involved in the explicit support and furtherance of violence directed against robbed, subjugated and excluded peoples."<sup>56</sup> According to the same report, "Violence and non-violence are alternate forms of power" and it sees Christian support possible for either form.<sup>57</sup> The Detroit conference went further than merely to distinguish between the violent reaction to systemic violence, the former being justified, but it also demanded that the Church take sides. "In any conflict between the government and the oppressed, or between the privileged classes and the oppressed, the Church, for good or ill, must stand with the oppressed, for Jesus did say 'Inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these, you did it unto me'. . ."<sup>58</sup> The chapter entitled "The Role of Violence in Social Change" ends with these words: "Whenever violence committed by the oppressed against systemic violence is deemed the more moral and more

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<sup>56</sup> U.S. Conference on Church and Society. Official Report. (National Council of Churches, 1968) p. 70.

<sup>57</sup> Op. cit., p. 71.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 72.



effective means to overcome the systemic violence, the Church should, in sorrow, support the violence of the oppressed by means of financing, marshalling of manpower, and the encouragement of the disciplined, effective use of that violence."<sup>59</sup>

Recognition of moral ambiguity appears in this report, but Christian sympathy has significantly shifted from those violently defending law and order to those violently seeking redress from unjust laws and unequal orders. It is the violence of those who seek to restrain exploitive violence who are justified, rather than those who seek to repress revolutionary violence.<sup>60</sup> There was considerable reaction and opposition to the Detroit conference,<sup>61</sup> but that it went as far as it did in registering a marked change in Christian attitudes to violence is an indication, in the view of Ellul, that the age-long pressure on the Christian community to conform are still effective. This is an argument that deserves our attention, since in the first chapter I said that much of our discussion would polarize around the Church's historical attitudes of rejection and accommodation. "It is the world that dictates how the Christian shall act; since he lives in the midst of a society where revolutionary movements are rife, he must

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. "The exploited man sees that his liberation implies the use of all means, and that of force first and foremost. . . Colonialism is not a thinking machine, nor a body endowed with reasoning faculties. It is violence in its natural state, and it will yield only when confronted with greater violence." Franz Fanon. Wretched of the Earth, p. 48.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Kyle Haselden's article in Christian Century Nov. 15, 1967.

take his cue from that society."<sup>62</sup> "A century ago nationalism was the ideological fashion and Christians went along with it, adducing every imaginable Christian motif to justify their stand. Today, social revolution etc. etc. are the fashion."<sup>63</sup> And again: "What troubles me is that Christians conform to the trend of the moment without introducing into it anything specifically Christian."<sup>64</sup> This is a valuable and sobering challenge which must be acknowledged. It would be more disturbing, were it not for other indications of Ellul's personal predilections. He cannot, for example, make the charge that "differences . . . are not so much a matter of theological disagreement as of temperament"<sup>65</sup> without facing it himself. His own personal interpretation of Christian love as "an interindividual matter"<sup>66</sup> leads him to blame the Death-of-God theology on "Two anterior developments: the discovery that Christians must participate in politics and in public affairs, and the justification of violence."<sup>67</sup> This interesting conclusion ignores what we have noted earlier,<sup>68</sup> namely, that Christians cannot ignore the consequences of their being involved, simply as citizens, in the

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<sup>62</sup> Op. cit., p. 51.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>65</sup> Op. cit., p. 23.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 77.

<sup>68</sup> See above, p. 78.

political scene; it also reverses Cox's contention<sup>69</sup> that the death-of-God episode resulted from the personalist, existentialist emphasis in theology. The test of Ellul's argument seems to lie in the area of the same anxiety as was articulated by Helmut Gollwitzer. "Just at the moment when we are inclined to regard as mistaken the traditional approval of Christian participation in the use of military force. . . we hear from our brethen in the under-developed countries that they consider it incumbent upon them to participate in national and social revolutionary struggles which involve the use of force."<sup>70</sup> It needs only to be pointed out that the paradox is as much geographical as historical. In the areas of the world where they have much to lose in the way of prestige and numerical support, the churches are predominantly reformist in their approach to such questions of human need. It is precisely this reformist and conformist attitude that is advocated by Ellul, even while he deplores conformity! In contrast, it is in the Third World, where the same economic and political pressures to conform operate, that the Churches are adopting a deliberately non-conformist stance to their own social patterns. Since they cannot expect to receive much patronage from revolutionary leaders, whose anti-religious bias we have already noted, it is in defiance of the pressures of conservatism that contemporary theologians are attempting to fulfil their

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<sup>69</sup> See above, p. 78.

<sup>70</sup> Quoted by J.M. Lochman, New Theology No. 6, p. 113.

tasks of interpretation. "Theology demands that more attention be paid to this dynamic ferment of the Gospel than to the established order of the Church."<sup>71</sup>

However, the desire of the Christian cannot be for violent revolution per se.<sup>72</sup> But instead of saying with Ellul that God can never require a violent reaction to a violent injustice, the more Scriptural and more flexible approach seems to be that of Peter Berger. "We can rather think of Christian action as a continuum bounded on one end by democratic activity, and by revolution on the other, with non-violent resistance somewhere in between. Each situation calls for a decision geared to that situation. . . . What all possibilities on this continuum have in common is their intention not only of alleviating but also of changing the social situation."<sup>73</sup>

According to a chart designed by Camilo Torres,<sup>74</sup> the situations of the world's ruling classes vary all the way from sympathetic adjustment in the face of reform demands - with the result in peaceful revolution - to repression of those same demands, with the result in violent revolution.<sup>75</sup> This places the onus on the established

<sup>71</sup> Social Message of the Gospels, Concilium Vol. XXXV, p. 150.

<sup>72</sup> ". . . unless he is a conscienceless advocate of violence and thus a killer, the call for revolutionary action will be a last resort". Martin Marty, op. cit., p. 113.

<sup>73</sup> Noise of Solemn Assemblies, p. 146.

<sup>74</sup> Guzman, Camilo Torres, pp. 54-55. See Appendix A.

<sup>75</sup> "King George adamantly refused to share power even in modest degree with the colonies. He provoked violence by scorning and spurning the appeals embodied in non-violent protests such as boycotts, peaceful demonstrations and petitions." Martin Luther King, op. cit., p. 9.

governments as to whether revolutionary movements will be peaceful or otherwise.<sup>76</sup>

The biographer of Torres quotes the late President Kennedy, to the effect that "Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable",<sup>77</sup> and sees this as a political endorsement of Torres' passionate conviction. Torres himself demonstrated that Christian moral responsibility cannot begin at demands for reform and then stop short at the likelihood of violence.<sup>78</sup>

What emerges clearly from the foregoing discussions is that, for the individual Christian and for the churches, there are many choices as to action in a revolutionary situation,<sup>79</sup> while there is only one motive. If the Christian, for love of neighbour, refuses to strike back in personal revenge, he still has the responsibility of

<sup>76</sup> "Where the established order dictates the decision regarding strategy, violence may appear to be the only way." Uppsala 68 p. 164.

<sup>77</sup> Loc. cit., p. 71.

<sup>78</sup> Colin Morris, op. cit., p. 24. "I, for one, believe that (Bonhoeffer's) explanation of the theology behind the bomb-plot might have more to say to our time. The new theology for which the Church is searching may be hidden in that violent deed. . . and not in his musings about God without religion."

<sup>79</sup> The article "Peace through Revolution" in The Social Message of the Gospels Concilium Vol. XXXV, indicates both the increase in violent revolutions, from 23 in 1958 to 58 being waged in 1965, and also the connection between revolution and poverty: only one of the 27 richest countries suffered serious internal conflict while the figure was 32 out of the 38 poorest nations.

deciding where the love of neighbour calls him and to what remedial action. . . for both the oppressing and the oppressed neighbour. He may make a personal and eschatological witness to the creative force of love in non-violence, recognising that the eschatological picture in Scripture is not of an existence without force as such, but of an age when human and divine forces will be concurrent instead of conflicting.

Another valid choice is for an involvement within conflict, a factor of our present age which Jesus recognized, encountered and even provoked.<sup>80</sup> In this latter choice is implied support for those expressions of force which are basically compassionate and oriented towards human fulfilment. What, however, seems to be without excuse in the light of Christian revelation is the frequently practised hypocrisy of deploring violence on the one hand and profiting from a partnership with violence on the other.

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<sup>80</sup> "I came not to bring peace, but a sword." Mtt. 10, 34.

## APPENDIX 'A'

Possible Forms of Structural Changes

Degree	<u>RULING CLASS</u>		<u>COMMON PEOPLE</u>		
	Desire	Foresight	Pressure	Result	Example
a = maximum b = medium c = minimum	b	a	a	Peaceful Revolution	Chile
	c	c	a	Violent Revolution	Cuba
	c	b	b	Reformism	Colombia
	c	a	b	Rightist Coup d'etat	Brazil
	c	a	c	Repression	Venezuela
	b	b	b	Status quo	Uruguay
	a	a	a	Ideal Peaceful Revolution	?

Chart designed by Camilo Torres. G. Guzman, op. cit., pp. 54-55.

## CONCLUSION

"Only as we start serving the fellowman do we discover the hardness of our hearts and our common need of salvation. Only as we become involved in revolution do we begin to realize that Christ's gift is a new kind of revolution." -  
Fourth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Uppsala, 1968.



The key to the preceding presentation lies in the text of the Bishops' Letter already quoted. "From the doctrinal point of view the Church knows that the Gospel demands that first fundamental revolution which is called 'conversion'. . . It has a communal aspect laden with implications for all society. . ." <sup>1</sup> Just as pastoral theology deals with the Church's mission to individuals, a theology of revolution deals with the Church's mission to structures and is complementary to the former. It takes into account the need for the conversion of a society or culture, and by this theology the Church can transcend the accommodation-rejection pattern. Part of the tendency to accommodate to society must be the norm of healthy individual adjustment, which is his accommodation to society. A theology of revolution, however, extends the area of pastoral concern to the society which may itself be sick when judged by the New Testament norms of community (1 Cor. 12, 12; 1 Jn. 4.7-21). It is not inappropriate to use the word "conversion" both as metaphor and as an indication of the continuity of Christian concern, from the sinful individual who contributes to the dislocation of the total community, to the sinful community itself which distorts the Gospel-goal of mature humanity (Eph. 5.13), and is in need of radical change. Economic adjustment to meet human needs, and the transfer of power

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<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 68.

made necessary by this adjustment, becomes a revolution of profoundly spiritual dimensions.

It may be as well to comment on the absence of "right-wing" movements in the survey of revolutions.<sup>2</sup> The philosophical basis of actual revolutionary movements has been "left-wing", so that a "right-wing revolution" is excluded by definition. We have made passing reference to the regimes of Hitler, South Africa and Latin America, but such regimes, usually established and maintained by force, have not effected any transfer of power. They represent no change at all. Totalitarian regimes of the "right-wing" merely remove all doubt as to the locus of power: it is where it is usually found, in the hands of industrialists, land owners and the military.

However, we have also noted the totalitarian regimes of the "left-wing" and the institutionalizing of revolution also calls for comment. Perhaps the formula Ecclesia Semper reformanda should be revised to express the extended role of a church with a theology of revolution. So radical is the Church's commitment to the Kingdom of God on earth, that there can be no total accommodation to any given revolutionary regime, still less to one that itself has become institutionalized.

Jacques Ellul speaks disdainfully of a "scattering of theses"<sup>3</sup> by the proponents of a theology of revolution, "unable to put their 'theology' on a firm basis." Perhaps "scattering" is the

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<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 52.

<sup>3</sup> Op. cit., p. 51.

right word to describe the many, recent, diverse attempts to grapple with the subject - as indicated in the Bibliography. However, these contributions do indicate that there is a theology emerging from the churches based on the foundation of Jesus himself. When reference is made from the recorded witness of Jesus to the analysis of Fr. Girardi concerning religious and revolutionary concepts,<sup>4</sup> there can scarcely be any doubt that Jesus used revolutionary concepts. His teaching was innovative, dynamic and oriented to the future of man on this earth. However, and the churches are warned by the example of Jesus, those who choose revolution must also count the cost. We are living in a world that is not yet liberated (Rom. 8, 21) and there was real blood on the Cross.

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<sup>4</sup> See above, p. 14.

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The Reverend Barry Percival Whittaker, born 1929, was educated in England. After graduating from Grammar School (Preston, Lancashire), he served two years in the Royal Air Force, mainly in Belfast, N. Ireland.

From 1951: King's College, London, Faculty of Theology.  
Archibald Robertson Prize; 1953.  
Summer Course, Chateau de Bossey, Geneva, Switzerland; 1954.  
Associateship of King's College, 1st Class Honours; 1954.  
Bachelor of Divinity, 2nd Class Honours, University of London; 1954.  
St. Boniface College, Warminster; 1954-1955.  
Specialist Teacher in Religious Knowledge, Manchester Board of Education; 1955-1957.  
Qualified as Teacher, Ministry of Education, U.K. (R.P. 56/704); 1957.  
Ordained Priest by Bishop of Manchester; 1957.  
Assistant Curate, Diocese of Manchester; 1957-1960.  
Windsor, Canada, Assistant and Incumbent, Diocese of Huron; 1960-1966.  
Charter Member, Essex County Pastoral Institute; 1964-1966.  
Institute of Advanced Pastoral Studies, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan; December, 1966.  
Experimental "Team Ministry", St. Thomas; 1967-1968.  
Candidate for Elgin County, N.D.P., Federal Election; 1968.  
Rector of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, London, from 1968.  
Part-time Lecturer, Huron College; Academic years, 1969-1971.