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THE WESLEYAN MOVEMENT AND LIBERATION THEOLOGY:  
ENCOUNTER AND DIALOGUE

By  
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A proposal for the project-dissertation submitted in  
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

ASBURY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

1989

Approved by Alan Coggedge

Department Theological Studies

Date May 11, 1989

### DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the only Eternal God  
and Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

I confess that Jesus Christ is my Lord.

Expressing my love, admiration and gratitude  
to my wife Zulay and my four children:

Kathleen Zulay, Karoline Esther,

Luis Fernando, Jr., and Jonathan.

"So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do,  
do it all for the glory of God." (I Cor. 10: 31).

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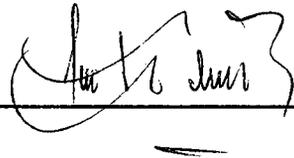
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## AUTHORIZATION

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A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "A. L. Fisher", is written over a horizontal line. A small horizontal tick mark is located below the line to the right of the signature.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

At this point in my years in Christian ministry, it gives me great joy to be at the place where I can write this doctoral Dissertation. This joy in the depths of my being I translate into gratitude before God the Father and His Son Jesus who has, through the unction of the Holy Spirit, enabled me to complete this project.

I am very grateful to the Institution of Asbury Theological Seminary of Wilmore, Kentucky, the center of studies that has, for the past five years, allowed me to develop a new perspective with regard to what could be my ministry in the immediate future.

My thanks to Dr. Ira Galloway pastor of the First United Methodist Church in Peoria, Ill. and his wife Sally, and to his church for the unconditional support they have offered me throughout my studies. My thanks also to others: to Dr. Powell Royster and his wife Helene; Mr. Carlos Thompson and his wife Esther who in many ways have demonstrated their love for me and for my family throughout this entire process of study and accomplishment.

I want to express my profound gratitude to my wife Zulay Palomo, not only for her support and encouragement, but for her direct contribution to the writing process: reading and typing the rough drafts for this project and

finally, for putting in final form this dissertation; and to Miss Chalene Helmuth for her collaboration in reviewing the translated draft.

I would also like to express my gratitude to Dr. Reginald Johnson, Dr. Allan Coppedge and Dr. James Mannoia for their support and guidance in my research process.

## INTRODUCTION

The theme to be developed in this doctoral dissertation is based on eighteen years of practical experience in pastoral ministry, the last twelve functioning as President/Bishop of the Methodist church of Costa Rica (1973-1985).

In the ten years of leadership I spent in the church I met with the emergence of Liberation Theology. This was a difficult experience, for it involved me not only in the realm of ideas and theories, but in the crucible of practical ministry as well. This was a demanding interaction that tested the truth of my commitment in the contextual reality of Costa Rica.

I must confess that my ministry was influenced by a strong bias against Liberation Theology. This resulted in a lack of desire to understand the ideas it proposed. At the same time there was a lack of depth in regard to the principles of my own church and of our Wesleyan heritage. These two factors made genuine dialogue and productive confrontation impossible.

The lack of a solid basis for an honest, creative dialogue and the absence of real confrontation has produced pronounced wear and tear among the church's leadership, and has resulted in the loss of outstanding members including leaders. This very deficiency is causing a polarization in

the Christian Church throughout Latin America. The effects of this polarization are evident in the irreparable damage of the permanent division that is taking place. The result could very well be the acceptance of a political option.

This ideological tension has debilitated the message of love, unity and redemption in Jesus, which Christians must offer to a world struggling with sin, division and confusion.

The historical development and the present contextual situation of Latin America demands serious investigation. Such investigation must offer positive reflection leading to dialogue and to an encounter between the Wesleyan movement and Liberation Theology.

Through this dissertation I will attempt to demonstrated how a lack of knowledge regarding theological heritage, in this case of Wesleyan Theology, has been an important factor which has kept the church from clearly defining the mission of the Evangelical Methodist Church of Costa Rica in its missiological dimension. This lack of knowledge has also kept the church from developing a strategy of ministry that would consolidate the many efforts that church leaders, lay people and pastors have sought to develop. With the purpose of presenting this truth objectively, the first two chapters approach the history of the Wesleyan Movement with respect to several of its theological positions.

It should be added that throughout history the church has been vulnerable to the influence of pre-existing thoughts and attitudes toward its mission. Since the 1960s, particularly, the Methodist Church of Costa Rica has been continually attacked by the ideology that has been present in the Latin America Church due to the ecumenical movement. Consequently, the Methodist Church of Costa Rica has had to sustain the blows and attacks of liberal theology, especially that began with the I.S.A.L. (Iglesia y Sociedad America Latina) and that, during the last fourteen years, has suffered due to the presence of Liberation Theology.

This kind of liberal thinking which has been far removed from the national church and foreign to the Costa Rican people has been considerably damaging to the missiological perspective of the church. For this reason, in this dissertation I will investigate the roots of Liberation Theology in Latin America in relation to several doctrinal premises. This investigation will allow us to see not only some similarities between the Wesleyan and Liberation Movements, but also the marked contrasts in thinking and in projection regarding the message of Jesus Christ.

Finally, I have included a chapter that deals with the history of the Methodist Church in Costa Rica in order to show its missiological and theological inconsistencies.

This calls for a serious proposal which would attempt to fill this internal deficiency and would solidly center theological and formative permanence in the life and mission of the church.

For this reason the final chapter proposes the opening of the Methodist Theological Seminary of Costa Rica, one that would be the center of operative theology in order to develop leadership at both the pastoral and lay levels. In addition to this, it would be a center that offers a vision and an orientation that integrates proclamation and praxis which Jesus Christ envisioned for the Church.

## Chapter 1

### HISTORICAL WESLEYAN MOVEMENT

#### I. Historical Context of the Protestant Reformation XVI Century

The Wesleyan movement cannot be isolated from the Church's historical process. Rather, it is part of the continuous historical development of the Church. It could be said specifically that the Wesleyan movement has in its roots a close relationship with the Protestant Reformation of the XVI Century.

The historical setting which the Reformation had to confront and respond to was not a passive situation; on the contrary, it was turbulent, saturated with a series of contradictions which left the people in a position of uncertainty regarding their rights and responsibilities. The central nucleus of the Reformation was Germany at the beginning of the XVI Century, the context of which was in many ways critical.

The movement of the Protestant Reformation arose in the electorate of Saxony, a German State which formed part of the Holy Roman Empire. The cry for reform came out of the decline of the Roman Catholic Church, and there were specific reasons in Germany that also invited a revolution which would historically be known as the Protestant Reformation.

During the XVI Century the political, economic, social and religious factors that opened the way

to the Reformation converged in a negative way. Papal taxes and Papal intrusion in ecclesiastical appointments were considered oppressive.<sup>1</sup>

"Perhaps no other European nation suffered such Papal exploitation at the time as did the German people."<sup>2</sup> The division that existed in Germany had made it a land fit for feudalism, and the Roman Papacy took advantage of this.

At the heart of the Protestant Reformation of the XVI Century was Martin Luther, a humble man clearly conscious of the people's feelings. At the beginning of his theological career Luther experienced great fervor and passion for salvation. Two ideas concerned him greatly. First of all he had a very vivid concept of God's absolute justice and this produced in him a deep and convicting sense of his personal sinfulness and unworthiness. His great question in the midst of the crisis was: How could he propitiate and satisfy this God of wrath?

In this melancholic context, between 1512-1515, Dr. Stampitz guided Luther and led him to the revelation which would reveal to him the conviction of the Gospel's essence, i.e. that salvation is only by faith.

The context of his experience was meaningful. At the same time Luther had been working on his understanding of Paul's Epistle to the Romans. Romans 1:17 reads: "For in it

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1. Williston Walker, Historia de la Iglesia Cristiana, (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 1967), p. 53.

2. Wilton M. Nelson, Manual de la Historia Eclesiástica, Costa Rica: Seminario Bíblico, 1962), p. VI-7.

the justice of God is revealed, from faith unto faith, as it is written, 'He who is just lives by faith'." This experience with Scripture led Luther to the conclusion that good works, including theological affirmations about the theory of indulgences, were absolutely unnecessary to attain salvation.

Luther affirmed that a person is saved by faith. Luther believed that the Catholic doctrine and its practice had raised barriers that were merely religious, so that at this time what operated in the Church was a power structure which controlled the lives of believers, and which made it impossible for people to live and experience the love of God and His salvation.

The Catholic Church at the time controlled Scripture, which was read only in Latin and had not been translated into the vernacular. Thus all interpretations and theological development were controlled and dictated by the Roman Church.<sup>3</sup>

Luther challenged the Church in Rome by nailing his 95 theses on the door of the Church in Wittenberg on October 31, 1517. These theses, even if far from expressing completely Luther's definite ideas, evidenced certain principles which if developed could revolutionize the ecclesiastical practices of the day. Luther's focus was changing as he describes: Repentance is not an act, it is a lifetime mental habit. The Church's real treasure is God's forgiving grace. The Christian, instead of evading divine

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<sup>3</sup>. Ibid., p. VI-7.

discipline, should seek it. "Every truly repentant Christian is entitled to total forgiveness from punishment and guilt even if there are no letters of pardon" (Thesis 36).

"In Germany's restless environment, it was quite an event for a religious leader, to speak openly against such abuse. The Theses spread rapidly throughout the Empire."<sup>4</sup>

By this time Luther had already developed some of the evangelical convictions:

- a) justification by faith,
- b) universal priesthood -- every Christian has direct access to God,
- c) Scripture's final authority,
- d) Scriptures are interpreted by the Holy Spirit,
- e) God's essence is love, and
- f) assurance of salvation.<sup>5</sup>

It was the Leipzig "dispute" (June 27, 1519), the discourse at the Diet of Worms' (August 18, 1521), and four contracts which were immediately published, which marked the steps toward a new church separate from Rome.

They formed the basis for this rupture's theological arguments, which later appeared in the Confession of Augsburg in 1530. This constituted the demarcation of what would modify Medieval Europe's political and religious

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4. Walker, p. 341.

5. Nelson, p. VI-10.

geography. 6

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6. Jean Pierre Bastian, Breve Historia del Protestantismo en America Latina, (Mèxico: Casa Unida de Publicaciones, 1986), p. 24.

## II. Effects of the Reformation in England

The effects of the Reformation in England in the XVI Century allow us to examine the context in which the Wesleyan movement was born and later developed.

England was gradually being prepared to accept some of the changes that occurred in its national life. For a long time anticlericalism and antipapal feelings had existed in England. During the Renaissance, English leaders had expressed a great interest in the Church.

There were vestiges of the doctrines of William of Occam (1280-1349), an Englishman and the great opposer of the doctrine of papal infallibility. Long before Henry VIII, the possibility of separating from Rome and creating an English patriarchate under the Archbishop of Canterbury had been considered.<sup>7</sup>

Other effects include the influence of John Wycliff, who was author of a rebellion against doctrinal and political Romanism. In spite of the persecution it suffered, Wycliffism never died. The Renaissance movement had produced a rebirth of the study of Scriptures. John Colet, the great humanist, was evangelical in spirit; he was Erasmus' and William Tyndale's spiritual father.

Colet had strongly criticized the fronts and corruption under which the clergy were living. "Erasmus wrote a critical edition of the New Testament text and, like Colet, had attacked the same type of problems within

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7. Nelson, p. VI-61.

the clergy's situation and their corruption."<sup>8</sup> All these aspects had come together and made up the profile of a rather independent church and were at the same time linked to a very patriotic and nationalistic spirit. However, at the beginning of Henry VIII's reign, there was nothing that could predict there would be a change in the existing ecclesiastical situation. But when the change came it was "this nationalist spirit that would constitute a basis of support for Henry's reforms."<sup>9</sup>

In March 1518, Erasmus sent copies of Luther's 95 theses to his humanist friends in England, Colet and More. Luther's other writings were also circulating in the southern part of the island. Leo X urged the King and his Prime Minister, Cardinal Wolsey, to forbid the circulation of these writings.<sup>10</sup> Henry VIII also published in 1521 his affirmation of the seven Sacraments against Luther, in merit of which, Leo X granted him the title of "Defender of the Faith".<sup>11</sup>

The translation of the New Testament was one of the factors that encouraged the Reformation's process.

Twelve years later things would be taking a considerable turn in England under Henry VIII's reign. What changed the course of the Reformation in England was the problem Henry had with Pope Clement VII regarding the legitimacy of his marriage with Catherine of Aragón, a marriage which had been arranged by his father, Henry VII, for political convenience. Henry had fallen in love with Anne Boleyn, a lady who was part of the Royal Court. He was also having

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<sup>8</sup> W. E. Lunt, History of England, (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1957), p.308.

<sup>9</sup> Walker, p. 401.

<sup>10</sup> Nelson, p. VI-62.

<sup>11</sup> Walker, p.402.

problems with his succession to the throne, since he had no legitimate sons that could be his heirs; therefore, Henry officially requested Pope Clement VII to annul his marriage. Because of political considerations, however, the Pope did not grant Henry's request.<sup>12</sup>

In the meantime, Thomas Cranmer, Cambridge professor and sympathizer of Lutheranism, suggested a plan of taking matters from the Pontifical Court and submitting it to European universities' canons. The idea pleased Henry and he approved it (1530). Many universities rendered a verdict in his favor. This was the first step in the break between Henry and the Pope. The second step was taken in 1531 when the clergy were convoked and obliged to declare that the King was the "supreme head of the Church and of the clergy up to what is permitted by Christ's laws".

In May 1532 the clergy's convocation, called the "clergy's submission," declared that the clergy could not issue new legislation without the King's permission, and that the existing ecclesiastical law must be submitted to revision. In January, 1533, Henry secretly married Anne Boleyn. In March Cranmer was made Archbishop of Canterbury. Cranmer was already a Lutheran and was married. In May, Henry's marriage with Catherine was declared null by the Ecclesiastical Court, based on the fact that Catherine's previous marriage had been consummated; therefore, Catherine's and Henry's marriage had not been legitimate. In June Anne was crowned Queen of

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<sup>12</sup> Nelson, p. VI-63.

England, and in September, Elizabeth the new queen's eldest daughter, was born.

The Pope of course was offended by Henry's actions. He declared Henry's marriage with Catherine valid. He demanded that Henry denounce Anne and restore Catherine under penalty of excommunication. Parliament answered with a series of anti-Papal statutes:

- a) it forbade the sending of annates and taxes to Rome;
- b) it forbade appealing to Rome for dispensations;
- c) it decreed the "Act of Succession" declaring that, since there was no male heir to the throne, Elizabeth would inherit it;
- d) it decreed the "Act of Supremacy (1534) wherein the King was declared "The Supreme Head of the Church of England;"
- e) it declared that calling the King a heretic or a schismatic was an act of treason. Later, as the climax of it all, the religious leader of Canterbury and York abjured Papal supremacy. This step completed the break from Rome.<sup>13</sup>

In 1536, Henry wrote Ten Articles making therein his maximum concessions to Protestantism. The authoritative norms of the faith were the Bible, the Nicene and Athanasian Apostolic Creeds, and the "first four councils." Only three Sacraments are defined: Baptism, Penance and the Lord's Supper; the rest are not mentioned, neither

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. VI-63-64.

favorably nor unfavorably. Justification implies faith in Christ alone but confession, absolution and charitable works were also necessary.

Christ was physically present in the Supper. The images must be honored, but with moderation. Saints are to be invoked, but not because they can "hear us sooner than Christ." Masses for the dead are desirable but the idea that "Rome's Bishop" can save from Purgatory must be discarded. An event, initiated by Cranmer, that had greater influence at that time was that in 1537 the sale of a translation of the Bible, based greatly on Tyndale's, but also considerably on Miles Coverdale's inferior work, was permitted. In 1538, Cromwell ordered that this version be placed at the public's disposal in all churches.

The Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments had to be taught in English and the Litany was translated; however, while Henry lived, the rest of the worship did not suffer substantial variations.<sup>14</sup>

There are various differing judgments about Henry VIII because of contradictory comments that he made during several phases of his reign.

"It cannot be denied that he ruled with an iron hand, up to the point of being cruel."<sup>15</sup> His despotic leadership permitted him to lead England through an ecclesiastical revolution that culminated with a break from Rome. After a

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<sup>14</sup> Walker, p. 406.

<sup>15</sup> Lunt, p. 317.

process of succession in the Kingdom of England, Elizabeth's reign arrived in 1558 until 1603.

The new queen was a very gifted woman and a very sly stateswoman. She became one of the most famous queens in English history, officially founding the Anglican Church in 1559. This Church maintained a hierarchical organization, as well as the liturgical forms of Rome; it adopted the vernacular language and had its members add their voices to the Minister's. It formulated its confession of faith in Thirty-nine Articles.<sup>16</sup>

The most notable characteristic of the English reformation is that it did not produce any leaders like Luther, Calvin or Zwingli. "It did not bring about any considerable spiritual awakening among the people; its forces were political and social."<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Mateo Lilievre, Juan Wesley, Su Vida y Su Obra, (Kansas City: Casa Nazarena, 1911), p. 12.

<sup>17</sup> Walker, p. 415

### III. England's Social Context, XVIII Century

In order to understand the English society and the inspiring force behind the Wesleyan movement, it is necessary to know and understand the social context of England in that century. It could be optimistically asked: what does the XVIII Century represent for England? One could respond that it was the century when the English economy became the world's economic center. This focus on the economy of England is correct, because it played a very important role in social development.

During the XVIII Century the textile industry played a greater role than any other within England's industrialization. The industrial revolution introduced another type of textile: cotton, which brought about the development of new products and technologies. At the end of the XVIII Century, coal began to be used in the production of iron, which had, until then, utilized only charcoal. Because of its location as an island, England enjoyed advantages for maritime transportation.

The middle class had the resources that helped carry on this industrial development. "Industrial growth continued in such a way as to produce a definite separation of classes, and with this, the division of society."<sup>18</sup> There arose three well-defined groups. The upper strata was occupied by gentlemen who enjoyed the status-quo and a

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<sup>18</sup> Lunat, p. 528-530.

series a privileges as part of high society. Secondly, there were merchants, who were persons who could make large fortunes through their businesses. This group consisted of the middle class who came to exert pressure in the political arena. Constituting the third category were the workers, who represent the largest section of society. "This class was made up of the city's artisans and the rural workers."<sup>19</sup> Heitzenrater came to consider England's XVIII Century as a century of contrasts between the extremes of rich and poor, monarchies and republicans, immorality and virtue. "This was the England of the post-Restoration, after the restrictive Puritan revolution."<sup>20</sup>

In the face of this social agitation Watson describes the English context as one of which challenged the established order, of displacement of rural populations to the cities characterized by the concentration of industries and monopolies, by commercial pressures with its empire in full commercial manufacturing expansion. "The fast growth of the poor" was inevitable, the dehumanizing situation could not be avoided.<sup>21</sup>

Lelievre the historian, making reference to this social context, points to some very crude but important

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 539.

<sup>20</sup> José Duque, ed. La Tradición Protestante en la Teología (Tradición Metodista). (Costa Rica: D. E. I., 1983), p. 105.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

factors that allow us to see life as it was in the midst of the existing contrasts.

England's popular classes in the XVIII Century were ignorant and disorderly. From the previous century's political agitations they had inherited a very pronounced tendency to rioting. Alternatively and equally violent they were on the Whigs' side one day, and on the next they favored the Tories; but what never changed was their intense hatred towards the Papists on one side, and towards dissenters on the other. Drunkenness wreaked havoc among the lower classes. Half a century after introducing gin, Englishmen consumed over three hundred thousand hectoliters a year. In 1736 one out of every six houses in London was a tavern. Parliament tried in vain to forbid the sale of gin, combatting the black market that was organized throughout England. The commoners would throw all those who dared to denounce this abuse into the river. The people's attitude was so threatening that the Chamber of Commerce was forced to revoke the law.

Even if the rural dwellers were not as demoralized, they lived in a semi-barbaric state. Inhabitants of coal-producing districts could almost be considered savages. Mine workers, overwhelmed by the weight of extremely hard labor that produced little, led such a miserable life that come Sunday they did not even think of going to Church, nor did anybody bother to invite them. Their diversions consisted in rough games, fights, and assiduous visits to the tavern. Immorality and excess reigned everywhere. Two centuries after the Reformation, many Roman superstitions still remained. Such were the people, the low classes degraded to the point of brutalization, the educated classes corrupt to the point of cynicism, that Methodism set out to reform. It seemed that the nation had reached that place of extreme degradation where the only alternatives are to choose either to perish or to make a new life.

The moral state described above undoubtedly justifies the assertion of an Anglican writer that England had fallen into complete paganism when Wesley appeared.<sup>22</sup>

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22 Lillievre, p. 16-18.

In spite of the chaotic situation of the XVIII Century, there were still men and movements who tried to make things better. However, these efforts exerted local and partial influence at best. The English masses had spiritually fallen into lethargy, even if they were blindly conscious of sin and convinced of the reality of future compensations and punishments. The feelings of loyalty to Christ, of salvation through Him, and of a present transforming faith in Him had not yet been awakened. They lacked the appeal of a living spiritual zeal capable of changing the heart, instead of giving way to considerations of prudence or of cold, logical arguments.

That England underwent a deep transformation, the results of which flowed as beneficial currents throughout English-speaking lands, was mainly due to three men: John and Charles Wesley and George Whitefield. These men were to make out of England and North America something quite different spiritually from what they were, and who permanently earned the gratitude of these countries.<sup>23</sup>

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23 Walker, p. 509.

#### IV. The Anglican Church

Montesquieu, visiting England in 1731, reported "England has no religion." This was, of course, somewhat of an exaggeration. Sometime later, however, "John and Charles Wesley founded the Wesleyan movement in Oxford, in the face of the crisis the Anglican Church was suffering."<sup>24</sup> In the midst of this confusion, the state of the Church of England cannot be forgotten.

From its beginning with Henry VIII, since its foundation under Elizabeth in 1539, the Church in its Reformation movement did not produce a spiritual awakening. Rather, it was openly prompted by political and social actions. It is truly a shame that the Reformation was guided and supported by Henry VIII, who did not wish to break with the past, only with the issue of supremacy, which he denied the Pope in order to attribute it to himself.<sup>25</sup>

By this time the Church was already duly established; it was the official national Church. Bishops had seats in the House of Lords, and since the clergy were more numerous than the available ecclesiastical positions, they depended on favors from politicians to obtain their positions. This, at the same time, was rewarded by favoring those politicians with unconditional support.

The masses lived on the fringes of the Church. It did not include new mineral and industrial zones, where the Methodist movement was to take root and grow. Even if the

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<sup>24</sup> Skevington A. Wood, The Burning Heart (Minnesota: Bethny House., 1978), p.16.

<sup>25</sup> Lillievre, p. 11.

Anglican Church enjoyed special privileges, what actually took place in the XVIII Century was a subordination of the ecclesiastical to the political. As John Wesley's German biographer, Martin Schmidt, says: the history of Great Britain, from the Middle Ages on, presents a classical example of ecclesiastical politics.

"In few countries were the forces that moved ecclesiastical matters so strongly determined by political events or by the action of state authorities as they were in England."<sup>26</sup> Governing leaders suffered a very sad moral decline and Robert Walpole, the Prime Minister, lived for twenty years in disgraceful and continuous adultery. Lord Chesterfield, in his letters to his son Philip, introduced him to the strategies of seduction as part of his political education, Lady Mary Wortly Montagu declared that in society, "the married state was actually ridiculous for young people."<sup>27</sup>

A strengthening of the Christian faith was undoubtedly eminent under this alarming condition of morale. Rationalism had prevailed in almost all the churches, leaving them with a deistic theology, completely submerged in darkness. For quite a while the decline of the Church had caught the attention of reflective individuals. Bishop Burnet's eloquent lamentation has often been: "I have

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<sup>26</sup> Duque, p. 106-107.

<sup>27</sup> Wood, p. 12.

reached the age of seventy and before I die, I wish to speak more frankly. Terribly anguished I glimpse the imminent ruin threatening the Church."<sup>28</sup>

He continues, addressing the clergy's ignorance, the swiftness with which Sacred Scriptures are dispensed with, and the general tendency to become involved in political matters and leave the salvation of souls unattended. It is evident that Great Britain's moral and religious state at that time demanded a second reformation. Certain discerning men sensed its proximity. Voltaire had a different opinion, expressing it as follows: "They are so tired of religion in England that should a new one, or a renewed old one appear, it would fail completely."<sup>29</sup> A number of significant, combined efforts were being carried out to achieve a more enthusiastic religious life.

Among these were the "societies," the oldest of which was established by a group of young men from London, around 1678, in order to read the Bible, to cultivate religious life, to fellowship frequently, to help the poor, soldiers, marines, prisoners, and to stimulate preaching. These societies were rapidly diffused.

Towards 1700 in London alone there were almost one hundred of these societies, and they could be found in many parts of England and even in Ireland. One of these

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28.

29 Lilievre, p. 20-21.

societies was formed by John Wesley's father, Samuel Wesley, in Epworth, in 1702. In spite of the attempts to rescue those people from their chaos, the need for more than human activity to bring about the spiritual recovery of those masses became evident. The transformation that was to reach England would do so through the great Wesleyan movement. This would come with Jesus Christ's message and the motivation for a change on the spiritual and material levels. This would bring about England's recovery.

## V. Origins of the Wesleyan Movement

The historical impact that Wesleyanism had first on Europe's Protestant Reformation and then, on the growth of Protestantism throughout the world, makes it one of the most extraordinary religious movements God has stirred up since the XVIII Century. The person called to lead that movement was John Wesley, who was born in 1703 and died in 1791. He had been born in a home in which the barest necessities were considered a luxury, and when he left this world he bequeathed to it his possessions: two silver spoons, a silver teapot, a worn-out frock coat, and the Methodist Church. John Wesley suffered the rigors of human experience, and he travelled from poverty to the wealth of the soul; from a struggling childhood, he rose to the social position of leading the most outstanding revolution of modern times. He endured hunger, a period about which he says: "between the ages of ten and fourteen, there was little else I had to eat besides bread, and this was not in great quantities either."<sup>30</sup> I was a glorious age, when it was little to "walk ten kilometers to comply with a preaching promise."<sup>31</sup>

Individuals from many previous generations contributed with their effort to the definition of a trajectory for the Wesleyan movement. The history of Methodism begins, then,

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<sup>30</sup> Walker, p. 508-509.

<sup>31</sup> Basil Miller, John Wesley (Puerto Rico: Editorial Betania, 1983), p. 30.

with Wesley's ancestors. A historian from that family affirms that there are traces of it in the X Century, before England was united under a sovereign power. Studying this genealogy, he reaches the following conclusion:

from what we know about this distinguished family, we find that its members excelled in their knowledge, piety, poetic and musical inspiration. We must add some other equally peculiar characteristics: loyalty and nobility.<sup>32</sup>

John Wesley was a descendant of nonconformists. His two grandfathers were clergymen who had been expelled in 1662. However, his father, Samuel Wesley (1662-1735), had preferred the ministry of the established Church, and from 1695 until his death, he was rector of the parish in Epworth. "He was a man of sincere religious inclination; he was not a very practical man, and he wrote a Life of Christ in verse, as well as a commentary of the Book of Job."<sup>33</sup> Samuel had a great influence on John. Samuel emphasized the importance of sacred languages; he was convinced that preachers should have their mental capacity duly trained and exercised. He cultivated the love of poetry in his sons: Charles and John are considered excellent hymn composers.

He was also very faithful to the Anglican Church and

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<sup>32</sup> Sante Uberto Barbieri, Una Extraña Estirpe de Audaces (Buenos Aires: El Camino, 1958), p. 10.

<sup>33</sup> Walker, p. 509.

to its Orthodox theology; its spiritual influence was positive, placing a clear emphasis on the Bible as central to the Christian task and faith. For Samuel Wesley, the sacraments were vital as a means of grace, and he led his sons into a knowledge of devotional literature. We also find in the Wesley household the influence and presence of an exemplary mother.

Susannah Wesley (1669-1742) was a model wife and mother. As a wife she was always ready to follow her husband and to second him in all situations and trials. She was always willing to make even the greatest of sacrifices for him and to defend him from any attack whatsoever. In all respects, she was a great help to him both in his life and in his work. As a mother, she did her utmost to gift her sons with the best and the noblest that the Christian religion can offer. It is likely that Susannah Wesley was very severe and rigid in her educational methods. What matters most, however, is that she adopted a method and, above all, that it was a worthy one, committed to high ideals.

She would set aside a time for her sons to do their lessons. She was the only teacher they had in the village of Epworth. Her son Samuel was the only one for whom they provided a special teacher during his childhood.

Religion was the priority for Susannah in her home. She zealously maintained a watchful eye on her sons' religious education. It is for this reason that her sons became such distinguished individuals, of great service to the world.

Besides devoting time to family devotions, she separated one hour a week for each child.<sup>34</sup>

Susannah's background was Puritan; not even her nineteen children could keep her from fulfilling her tremendous responsibility of guiding her home to Christ's feet. Theological knowledge was of great importance in the heritage with which she gifted her children.

Susannah used to say:

I insist on submitting the will of children from a very early age, because this is the only solid and rational foundation for a religious education, without which both precept and example would result ineffective; but once this is done consciously, the child can be governed by his parent's reason and piety until he reaches understanding, maturity, and the principles of religion have taken roots in his soul.<sup>35</sup>

Her son John Wesley was able to breathe and share that firm, moral quality of his mother, influencing notoriously the one God was preparing to be the father of Methodism in England.

Those spiritual and scholarly elements surrounded John, rendering years later the spiritual awakening that saved England from a social cataclysm that could have been as fierce as the French Revolution.<sup>36</sup>

In 1720, Wesley entered Christ Church's College, one of the best of the superior cultural establishments that formed part of Oxford University. He graduated in 1724, was ordained deacon by the Bishop of Oxford in 1724, and in

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<sup>34</sup> Baibieri, p. 36.

<sup>35</sup> Miller, p. 13, 34.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

March of the following year was elected fellow of Lincoln College.

At the beginning of 1725, he decided to consecrate himself to the Christian ministry and sent a letter to his parents notifying them of his decision. His father Samuel answered him saying that he should not embrace that career "like Eli's children" to earn his daily bread, "but rather to glorify God and be useful to men."<sup>37</sup>

His mother Susan replied:

My dear Johnny: The change that has been produced in your spirit gives me much to think about. Not being distrustful, I wish to believe that this change is the work of the Holy Spirit who, purging from your heart all wish for sensual pleasures, will prepare and dispose your mind so that you may apply yourself seriously and consistently to the things of a more sublime and spiritual nature. In this case, you will be blessed if you maintain that disposition and make the firm and good purpose of making religion your life's business. After all, if the object of existence is considered, this is all that is needed, all else is insignificant when compared to it.<sup>38</sup>

This decision, and his ordination as deacon, mark the beginning of the spiritual struggle through which John experienced his total conversion in 1738. For three years he helped his father (1726-1729); on September 29, 1725, he was ordained Presbyter. In his absence, in Oxford, in November, 1729, his brother, Charles Wesley, and two others had formed a small group or club. Their purpose was to

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<sup>37</sup> Douglas E. Bebb, Wesley: A Man with a Concern (London: The Worth Press, 1950), p. 6.

<sup>38</sup> Lillievre, p. 35.

further studies in their careers, but they soon devoted themselves to the study of important books and to fellowship.

When he returned in 1729, John became the leader of that group and began attracting other students. This group tried to carry out William Law's ideal of a consecrated life. An important addition to the club was George Whitefield, at the beginning of 1735. "This man was a powerful preacher, used powerfully by God in the pulpit."<sup>39</sup> It is important to point out the influence that certain literature had on John Wesley's life.

First, a book by Jeremy Taylor, The Rule and Exercise of Holy Living. The author points to the disciplines of a saintly life, frequent communion, fasting, reading Sacred Scripture, and keeping the Sabbath. He follows the path of theological studies, but devoted much attention to spiritual formation. The Imitation of Christ by Thomas a Kempis was another favorite book providing edification for Wesley. This book made him understand that the true religion has its seat in the heart and that God's law must guide our thoughts, as well as our words and deeds.

Amazing! This 22 year-old man, who was finally beginning to seriously study the problems of the inner life in Thomas a Kempis and Jeremy Taylor's schools, separated himself from his teachers to affirm two of the greatest

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

doctrines that were to characterize his religious system: the love of God for all men, and the right of Christians to live fully assured of their salvation.

Following Taylor's advice, Wesley began to keep a diary, continuing with it until he died, "becoming the richest and most trustworthy source we have of his life and works."<sup>40</sup> He also read William Law's books on Christian Perfection and A Serious Call. "Even if," he says, "I rejected certain ideas contained therein, these books showed me God's law in all its height, width, and depth."<sup>39</sup> However, undoubtedly the best book was the Bible; it was for Wesley his constant resource of knowledge and his final authority. His affirmation: "I am a man of only one book," was reaffirmed in his sermons and works.<sup>41</sup>

In order to paint a more complete picture of the origins of the Wesleyan Movement, it is necessary to mention four events that were of great importance in John Wesley's life after his academic preparation and ordination. First was "the Holy Club." John started it with his brother Charles. It consisted of a separate group, with John as its leader. The group developed the dynamics of the holy life, loving God and their neighbors. They followed a process of disciplines that fostered growth in the knowledge of Christ. Because of the consistency and

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>41</sup> Robert W. Burtner and Robert E. Chiles, John Wesley's Theology (Nashville: Abingdom, 1982), p. 17.

methodic way in which they carried out these disciplines they were called the Bible moths, the enthusiasts, and the methodicals, the nickname from which the name Methodist is officially derived.

The second event was a missionary journey to Georgia. On June 9, 1732, King George II decreed that a new American colony, which was to be called Georgia in his honor, was to be founded. This colony, located between South Carolina and southern Florida, owes its foundation to a philanthropist by the name of Oglethorpe, who had been Prince Eugene's camp aid. Prompted by his sympathy for the many individuals who as insolvent debtors filled the kingdom's jails, this good man obtained permission from Parliament to settle with these inmates the new land, of which he was designated Governor.

The first convoy of emigrants left at the end of 1732 under Oglethorpe's command, taking as their chaplain an Anglican minister. The newborn colony lacked pastors who would preach not only to the settlers, but who would also be ready to evangelize Indians and black slaves.

"Oglethorpe's eagerness was such that having heard Wesley preach, begged him to take charge of this mission."<sup>42</sup>

As he boarded the ship, Wesley told a friend of his why he was going to Georgia: "What encourages me the most to take this step is the hope of saving my soul. I hope to learn the real meaning of Christ's Gospel by preaching to pagans. They have no arbitrary explanations with which to

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<sup>42</sup> Lilievre, p. 53-54.

evade the Holy Scripture's final declarations, no vain philosophies to corrupt them, no sensationalist nor ambitious commentators to sweeten the bitter truths, they have no party nor interests they have to serve; therefore, they can receive the Gospel in all its simplicity. They are humble like children and anxious to learn and fulfill God's will. With God's grace I hope to lead a life consistent with my high beliefs as soon as I am free of all temptations surrounding me. Without fear of offending anybody, I will then be happy to live from the fruits of land and water; an Indian hut offers no temptation of luxury or malice. From the moment I say goodbye to my country as a preacher sent by God, I hope not to talk one single word that is not consistent with that character. I have been a great sinner since my youth, and my heart is still full of evil desires. But I am certain that, if I am truly converted, God will use me as instrument to strengthen my brethren and to preach His name to the Gentiles.<sup>43</sup>

On October 14, 1735, the two Wesley brothers boarded the *Simmonds* at Gravesend go to America, accompanied by two excellent companions. The trip was a difficult one, the storms threatened several times to sink the ship. In the midst of fear and anguish in the presence of death, Wesley observed in the Moravians that accompanied him a completely calm attitude and a peace that contrasted with that of the other passengers; this impressed him a great deal. One day during a church service, a storm appeared and cries of fear were heard. Only the Moravians remained calm. Wesley later asked one of them, "Weren't you frightened?" The Moravian replied, "Thanks to God, no."

"Here Wesley discovered and understood that his faith

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<sup>43</sup> John Wesley, The Works of John Wesley (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 1958), Vol. XII, p. 38.

was still weak compared to that of the Moravians."<sup>44</sup> On February 6, 1736, they landed in Savannah, Georgia, where Wesley lived for almost two years. His experiences in that colony were dramatic, but the experience he acquired was unparalleled and forced a confrontation between the faith he had been developing and the faith that the Bible states is necessary for salvation and for everyday life.

Wesley wanted to devote himself assiduously to the evangelization of Indians and did everything possible to make friends with them, but a great number of difficulties interrupted his plans. Wesley's diary shows us the fervor with which he gave himself to this task. In Savannah, as in Oxford, he devoted the greater part of his activity to "the little ones"; the poor, the sick and children were the object of special care on his part. He became very interested in the black slaves that at that time were numerous in America, exerting great effort to try to improve their situation. The great ability he had always had for learning languages came in very handy in the midst of the multitude of emigrants coming from all parts of the world.<sup>45</sup>

After his trip and his return from America, he sadly confessed:

I went to America to save the Indians, but, Who will convert me? Who will save me from this

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>45</sup> Lillievre, p. 58.

wicked and incredulous heart? I have a beautiful summer religion, I can talk about it, I can even believe in it while danger is far away; but once death looks me in the face my spirit becomes terrified. I cannot exclaim: 'for me death is gain,' Oh! Who will save me from this fear of death? What will I do? Where will I go to escape from it?<sup>46</sup> I have discovered what I least suspected, that in spite of my efforts in converting others, I am still unconverted.

I have learned that I find myself 'destitute from the glory of God,' that my heart is wholly 'corrupt and full of abomination' just like my life, since 'a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.' I have learned that, being 'far from the life of God,' I am a 'son of wrath' and a heir of hell; that my works, my feelings, my justice, far from reconciling me to an offended God, and from serving me to expiate my most significant sins (which are more numerous than the hairs on my head), they cannot withstand the scrutinizing looks of divine justice without having first being purified. I have learned that having my death sentence written in my heart, and having no excuse to offer, I have no hope left but that of being freely justified by the redemption found in Jesus. I have no hope if I do not seek Jesus and find Him, and find myself in Him, not having a justice of my own, which is by the Law, but that justice which comes from the faith of Christ, the justice that is from God by faith.<sup>47</sup>

This moment of crisis that Wesley experienced is the catalyst and preparation for another culminating moment in his life, the Aldersgate experience. After arriving in London, Wesley immediately initiated conversations with Moravians, especially with Peter Bohler. "Bohler taught personal surrender to Christ, instant conversion, and a happy life of faith."<sup>48</sup> Wesley held several meetings with

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<sup>46</sup> Works, Vol.I, p. 74.

<sup>47</sup> Lilievre, p. 46.

<sup>48</sup> Walker, p. 512.

the distinguished brother. This permitted Rev. Wesley to modify his mistaken position on the nature of true faith, that it consisted merely of an intellectual assent to revealed truths. Bohler showed him that a living faith, wherever one lives, produces peace of the soul and holiness, and that faith is none other but "the absolute confidence the soul has in God, which instills the certainty that one's sins have been forgiven by virtues of Christ Jesus, and that one has become reconciled to God."<sup>49</sup>

"I decided," Wesley adds in his diary:

to seek this grace without rest, rejecting completely any confidence, total or partial, in my own works or justice; and to dedicate myself to praying without ceasing for the faith that justifies, seeking the complete abandonment of self in the expiatory virtue of the Blood of Christ shed for me, putting my faith in it as in Christ who is my justification, my salvation, my redemption.<sup>50</sup>

John was at the door of a great event which would be the central point--the pivotal moment--that would change the direction of his life and ministry, that would powerfully raise up the new Wesleyan movement on Wednesday, May 24th. "I think it was about five o'clock in the morning when I opened my New Testament and read these words: 'By which he has given us very great and precious promises, so that by them you may participate in the

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<sup>49</sup> Mateo, p. 65.

<sup>50</sup> The Works of John Wesley, Vol. I, p. 97.

divine nature.' When I was about to go out I opened it again and found: 'the Kingdom of God is near.' In the afternoon, I was asked to go to Saint Paul's, where the antiphony there read: 'from the depths, oh Jehovah, I call to Thee...wait for Jehovah oh Israel, for there is mercy in Jehovah...'" During that entire memorable day of formation of his soul, everything suggested one thing to John: the redemption that would soon take place in his life.

When evening came, on Aldersgate Street, not far from Saint Paul, Wesley was dragged against his will to a meeting. In the afternoon, says John,

I went unwillingly to a meeting on Aldersgate Street where somebody was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. At approximately fifteen minutes to nine, while the speaker described the change God effects in the heart by means of faith in Christ, I felt a strange heat inside of me...The transformation had occurred. I had reached the summit and the rising sun of glory was in my soul. I felt I trusted in Christ," he continues, "In Jesus alone for my salvation, and I felt sure that He had taken away my sins, my own sins, and had saved me from the law of sin and death.<sup>51</sup>

After this profound experience, he would need to mature through the public ministry in which God was placing him through faith, the assurance of salvation, and joy in Jesus Christ, his Lord and Savior.

The other important event that led Wesley to be declared the father of the Wesleyan movement is intimately linked with George Whitefield, who had been at Oxford with

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<sup>51</sup> Miller, p. 60-62.

the two Wesley brothers. He had returned to the town of Bristol after a stay in the United States.<sup>52</sup> Whitefield had become one of the preachers and evangelists of the evangelical awakening in America and Europe.

He wished to continue as an itinerant evangelist, "but at the same time he did not want to abandon the multitudes that had been attracted to the Gospel."<sup>53</sup> He therefore decided to invite John Wesley to help.

The best thing would be for you to be here before I leave. Many are mature for the bands. I leave this entirely in your hands. I am just a novice; you are familiar with the great things of God. Come, I beg you; come soon. I have promised not to leave these people until you or somebody else comes to take my place.<sup>54</sup>

Because of his background in the Anglican Church, Wesley hesitated to preach outdoors; however, the opportunity of preaching the Gospel to the needy was irresistible. "Thus it was by accepting George Whitefield's invitation that he began, in Bristol, what he would do for over fifty years, as long as his strength allowed it."<sup>55</sup> John Wesley was a gifted organizer; however, it must be recognized that the formation of Methodism was gradual. In Bristol, 1739, he founded his first "truly Methodist society" and started building the

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<sup>52</sup> Howard A. Snyder, The Radical Wesley, (Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1980), p. 51.

<sup>53</sup> Duque, p. 121.

<sup>54</sup> Walker, p. 514.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 514.

first chapel on May 12, 1739.

Wesley had no intention of nor desire to create a movement separate from the Church of England. Therefore, what he founded were "religious societies" that had been known for quite some time, "but that now consisted only of converted individuals."<sup>56</sup> In spite of his tendency toward permanence with the Anglican Church, an irreversible reality became evident: the Wesleyan movement had started and it was strongly rooted in the poor, men and women who were only pieces in a large machine, who were part of a new industrial system.

John and Charles Wesley's preaching was well received by the multitudes: John Wesley continued affirming, "The world is my Parish."<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

### Summary

This first chapter focuses on the roots and origins of the Wesleyan movement. This process marks the importance of defining the Wesleyan movement from its birth.

I have chronicled this process, as I believe that our historical roots have meaning that leads us to an understanding of our Methodist heritage. This historical principle will guide us to a deeper knowledge of our own identity, which arises in the Methodist movement and which results in a church, Methodist by name, which is part of the universal body of Jesus Christ and which is scattered throughout the world.

I am sure that this knowledge becomes relevant as our Methodist identity is defined, and that it will train us to impart the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world where God sends us as His people and His Church.

## Chapter 2

### WESLEYAN MOVEMENT: THEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES

Wesleyan Theology was born in the writings of John Wesley spanning a period of more than fifty years. The principle sources are The Works of John Wesley in fourteen volumes, his sermons, and his diary. In a unique manner, the sources, like threads, weave a fabric of theology in practical terms.

In this chapter we will discuss some of the important theological positions of the Wesleyan movement.

#### I. The perspective of life in God and coming to Christ.

The emphasis in this first part is found in the doctrine of man and sin as well as the prevenient grace of God that leads to salvation.

#### II. The Vision of God for the World.

The emphasis will be on the Creation and on the call to a holy life.

#### III. The Pastoral "Praxis" of Evangelism.

This leads to a practical emphasis that comes directly from the Bible and establishes it as the only authority.

#### IV. The Social Involvement in the Transformation of Human Beings.

This will be a normative and integral perspective that is verified by concrete operations and actions in the Wesleyan movement.

## I. The Perspective of Life in God and Coming to Christ

### A. The Doctrine of Man and Sin.

Man was created in God's own image, He created him holy as He is Holy; merciful as He is merciful; perfect as his Father in heaven is perfect. Thus as God is love, also man is able to love. For God created man so that he will be an image of Him throughout eternity. "Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground" (Gen, 1:26, NIV). All of this gives us an incorruptible portrait from the time when God's glory first appeared on this earth.<sup>1</sup>

With in this perspective, undoubtedly, the interrelationship between God and man that He created is both eternal and total. Wesley believed that the original state of man was perfect.<sup>2</sup>

Man, by his very make-up is a conscious being free to decide for himself. He is a free moral agent in that he is able to make moral choices. This moral action in turn demands a law through which he determines his character/nature, a law which can either be obeyed or disobeyed by the individual. On the other hand, it would

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<sup>1</sup> H. Orton Willey and Paul T. Culberton. Introduction Christian Theology. (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 1946). pp. 172-173.

<sup>2</sup> Op. Cit., Cox. p. 33.

not be a moral issue if neither obedience or disobedience could not attribute to him either praise or blame. This would destroy the character of the moral agent. It is evident, nevertheless, the power to obey or to disobey is an essential element in man. God could have prevented the fall simply by destroying the free will of the individual, but this He would not do.<sup>3</sup>

The third chapter of Genesis guides us to the Biblical account of the fall of man where the seed of sin is implanted in humanity, leading man to his voluntary separation from his Creator. This act of sin, man's disobedience, in the persons of Adam and Eve brought as a consequence the loss of divine grace.

Man fell into a lost state of being the first moment that he obeyed Satan, no longer being in the likeness and image given to him by God. Although the Old Testament is not explicit regarding the exact nature of this change, its evidence inclines itself toward the dynamic, relational and positive categories. Sin gives birth to the corrupt human "I" sickly, feverish, or broken a condition that has come to man as the result of separation from God.<sup>4</sup>

Sin also leads to death. It is the Apostle Paul who declares to us in Romans 5:12: "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin,

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<sup>3</sup>. Works. VI. pp. 269-270, 352-353.

<sup>4</sup>. Purkieser, W.T., Richard S. Taylor, Willard Taylor Dios Hombre y Salvación. (Kansas: Beacon Hill, ) p. 91.

and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned" (NIV).

Wesley was unyielding in his affirmation that the nature of man was totally corrupt. Man lost all of the moral image of God, of justice and of true holiness. The natural image was not totally destroyed. Man continues being a man. Permission to further the human race, given by God's mercy, conserves man's natural image. In this way, according to Wesleyan theological format, not even a trace of God's image was left in man after the fall, except that which came by the grace of God.<sup>5</sup>

Wesley was unbending and even dramatic as he describes:

All the blessings which God hath bestowed upon man, are of his mere grace, bounty, or favor; his free, undeserved favor; favor altogether undeserved; man having no claim to the least of his mercies. It was free grace that "formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into him a living soul," and stamped on that soul the image of God, and "put all things under his feet." The same free grace continues to us, at this day, life, and breath, and all things. For there is nothing we are, or have, or do, which can deserve the least thing at God's hand. "All our works, thou, O God! hast wrought in us." These, therefore, are so many more instances of free mercy: And whatever righteousness may be found in man, this is also the gift of God.<sup>6</sup>

These affirmations of Wesley reveal man as a totally helpless being, the very kind of being that will require the atoning merits of Christ and His work of justification

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>6</sup> Wesley John. Works. Vol.V. p. 7.

before God.

## B. Saving Grace.

Confronting himself with the radical corruption of human nature, Wesley affirmed that the act of restoration had to come from outside, from somewhere other than from man. Wesley turns to what we know as grace, and this grace that comes from God. It is grace that takes on cosmic dimensions because it is grace that goes forth in search of the salvation of man. This grace is free; it does not come from man's own merit.

How freely does God love the world! While we are yet sinners "Christ died for the ungodly." While we were "dead in sin" God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all. And how freely with in all!

"The grace of God, whence cometh our salvation, is Free in all, and Free for all. First. It is free in all to whom it is given. It does not depend on any power or merit in man, no, not in nay degree neither in whole, nor in part. It does not in anywise, depend either on the good works or righteousness of the receiver, not on anything he has done, or anything he is. It does not depend on his endeavors. It does not depend on his good tempers, or good desires, or good purpose and intentions: for all these flow from the free grace of God; they are the streams only, not the root. They are not the cause, but the effects of it. Whatsoever good is in man, or is done by man, God is the author and doer of it. Thus is his grace free in all; that is, no way depending on any power or merit in man, but on God alone, who freely gave us his only Son, and "with him freely giveth us all things." <sup>7</sup>

For Wesley, this channel of God's grace begins with his perspective of preventive grace which is equivalent to

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7. Works. Vol. VII. PP. 373-374

the common, universal grace given to all men. Wesley clearly pointed out the purposes of this grace:

Yet it is no excuse for those who continue in sin, and lay the blame upon their Maker, by saying, "it is God only that must quicken us, for we cannot quicken our souls." For allowing that all the souls of men are dead in sin by nature, this excuses none, seeing there in no man, unless he has quenched the Spirit, that is wholly void of the grace of God. No man living is entirely destitute of what is vulgarly called natural conscience. But this is not natural: it is more properly termed, preventing grace. Every man has a greater or less measure of this, which waiteth not for the call of man. Every one has, sooner or later, good desires, although the generality of men stifle them before they can strike deep root, or produce any considerable fruit. Every one has some measure of that light, some faint glimmering ray, which, sooner or later, more or less, enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world. And every one, unless he be one of the small number whose conscience is seared as with a hot iron, feels more or less uneasy when he acts contrary to the light of his own conscience. So that no man sins because he has not grace, but because he does not use the grace which he hath.<sup>8</sup>

In light of this conceptualization of grace that develops, we can also see the action that man develops in areas of his salvation.

This grace comes from God and flows to natural man who is experiencing the great love of God for every one. This grace that comes from God leads man to that step of faith that is also a gift of God:

Because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions; it is by grace that you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with HIM in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his

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<sup>8</sup>. Works. Vol. VI. p. 512.

kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace that you have saved, through faith; and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of GOD; not by works, so that no one can boast (Eph. 2:4-9, NIV).

### C. Justification

This prevenient grace, once you surrender to it, becomes a "convicting grace." This conviction is the first true step toward salvation. It leads to repentance which becomes a condition of justifying faith.<sup>9</sup>

For Wesley, justification means the present forgiveness of sins and the state of being accepted by God. It is the remission of past sins. One is justified when he had real faith and not before. We should remember that even this faith is possible by prevenient grace of God in Jesus Christ.<sup>10</sup>

Wesley believed that the promised present victory over sin was possible only through the Christ life implanted in believers by the Holy Spirit. The Reformer's principles of sola scriptura and sola gratia were fixed stars in his constellation of theological principles as well.<sup>11</sup> Wesley, was at one with the Reformers in regarding justification not simply as the most important tenet of Christian belief but also as that which controls all the rest.

"Wesley's doctrine of justification", asserts Prof.

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<sup>9</sup>. Cox. p.95

<sup>10</sup>. Ibid., p. 95

<sup>11</sup> Melvin Dieter. Five Views On Sanctification. (Michigan, Zondervan Pub., 1987). p. 14

William R. Cannon " is the measure and determinant of all else."<sup>12</sup> In light of the Bible, Wesley sees this act of justification as the act of God on behalf of humanity:

This simple, clear teaching of the Holy Scriptures with respect of justification is forgiveness, the remission of sins. It is the act of God the Father, who by means of the propitiation made by the blood of His Son, manifested His justice, "mindful of having blotted out our past sins."<sup>13</sup>

Another important point to note is that justification is for all. Wesley explains, " God justifies the ungodly, every single kind of ungodly, and only the ungodly since the righteous have no need of repentance."<sup>14</sup> The inner conviction in this doctrine lies in pointing out "the merciful forgiveness of God.

Later, with regard to good works, Wesley adds: "All good works, in church language, follow after the act of justification and are, consequently, good and acceptable unto God in Christ Jesus in that they are the fruit of true, living faith."<sup>15</sup> Wesley arrives at the heart of the issue, affirming that the works of man before justification are not good works in the Christian sense in that they do not come as the result of faith in Jesus Christ.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Skivington Wood. The Burning Heart. (Minneapolis, Bethany House, 1978). p. 221

<sup>13</sup>. Sermones. Vol. I. p. 78

<sup>14</sup>. Ibid., p. 79.

<sup>15</sup>. Ibid., p. 80

<sup>16</sup>. Ibid., p. 80

Wesley, again following the Biblical doctrine of the Reformation, reaffirms the central importance of accepting this by faith: man must, therefore confess his faith in Jesus Christ in order to obtain forgiveness. In this sense, salvation is from God for all those who will accept it. In his poignant message on justification, John Wesley makes the call for that surrender in this way:

"Present yourself as a lost sinner, guilty and worthy as you are of Hell, and then you will find favor in His presence and you will be carried to the shed Blood, like a wretch, like the sinner that you are, vile and condemned. Then look at Jesus. There is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of your soul. Do not plead with works nor goodness nor humility nor with contrition nor humility. To do such a thing would be to deny the Lord who had bought you with His Blood."<sup>17</sup>

It is thus through Christ Jesus that we make a true step toward the full recovery of man. Jesus declared: "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost" (Luke 19:10). In this way, lost man can be found. Nobody is left lost or poor if he is found in Jesus, yet nobody remains found if he separates himself from Jesus. We need to emphasize, however, that this full recovery or justification, although it is essential to the act of salvation, also goes beyond this to the this act of being found. Man finds himself again in Jesus Christ, which includes a restoration of both position and condition in Christ. (Luke 15: 5-7; Luke 7: 24-28).<sup>18</sup>

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17. Ibid., p. 85.

18. Purkieser. p. 463

## II. The Vision of God

It is useful to examine the world perspective that the Wesleyan movement held in its adolescent gestation period. Historically, the conviction has been that the Wesleyan movement played an important, significant role in its time. Thus, most liberal, secular-minded historians have judge Methodism to be a reactionary movement, a protest against the Enlightenment and Reason, and they have seen its discipline, policy and doctrine from in this point of view.<sup>19</sup>

Though they have seen the revival as fanaticism burying reason, of religion once again proving itself the opiate of the people, some have conceded that Methodism may also have helped the workingmen to face the challenge of the burgeoning industrial order, and some have added it may even have prepared them for a later socialism.<sup>20</sup>

The social context of that time was urging drastic changes; changes that would allow England of that day to assume a new role. It is after analyzing the entire scope of the Wesleyan movement's role in society that many historians have conceded that the movement was indeed a decisive factor in the societal changes that took place. Semmel asserts:

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<sup>19</sup> Bernard. Semmel. The Methodist Revolution, (New York: Basic Books. Inc. Publishers, 1973) p. 4.

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. Ibid., p. 4.

The lower ranks in eighteenth-century France and England were exposed to great social and economic dislocation, accompanied by a disorientation of the traditional family structure. Such changes produce wide-spread and profound anxiety, and, one may argue with Tocqueville, religious revolutionary. Certainly it was to the anxious the dislocate, the rootless, the disturbed, that Methodist preachers came with their doctrine of reassurance. Though you are covered in sin, they said, though there is nothing in you which merits God's goodness, yet God is ready to welcome you-all of you- as His children, should you strive to attain His grace and live the holy life which will enable you to enter into His Kingdom This was a message of hope for men in despair.<sup>21</sup>

In the midst of the masses, Wesley caught a glimpse of the great alternative of restoration, the one which God created. The message that Wesley projected was with this purpose: to create a total transformation of the individual, created in the likeness and image of God.

Wesley saw the ecclesiastical machinery of his generation rusty and covered with dust; he chafed to cleanse it and set it in motion for the redemption of the general populace. His purpose was not to formulate a new theology or a new theory of church or State, but to touch dead bones with the breath of spiritual power and make them live; to release the winds of heaven, that they might blow upon the ashy embers of religion and kindle a purging, illuminating fire of righteousness and truth. He would substitute for the bondage of sin, the individual and social freedom of men, born again in the likeness of

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21. Ibid., p. 7.

Christ.<sup>22</sup>

The affirmation of Wesley, "the world is my parish", did not come from the fact that he did not have an appointment to his own local church, but rather from his vision for the world--a world where people move, a world into which Jesus was called to preach, a world that is filled by the multitudes for whom God has compassion. The passion that awoke in Wesley for souls was, beyond the shadow of a doubt, an irresistible current in his ministry. That is passion for moral righteousness and inward freedom was the center and essence of the evangelical crusade, there can be no doubt.<sup>23</sup>

The doctrine, the preaching, the fire of the Wesleyan movement made John Wesley the man who brought the reality of God's love back to the theological platform.

When one considers the contribution of John Wesley, especially with regard to his vision for the world, where man interacts with God, several theologians point out Wesley's ability to relate the grace of God to man through theological coexistence; a coexistence that can enter into everyday life. Nothing can define sanctification in practical terms any better than that which is involved in

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<sup>22</sup> John Wesley Breadyly. England Before and After Wesley, (London: England, 1930). p. 200.

<sup>23</sup>. Ibid., p. 200.

such relation.<sup>24</sup>

Mildred Wynkoop maintains that the dynamic emphasis in relation to God, man, love, grace, nature, salvation and interpersonal relations is crucial to the Christian faith. John Wesley's understanding of love can be supported only by an underlying "metaphysic", which is dynamic in nature.<sup>25</sup>

From a hermeneutical perspective, we affirm that Wesley identified and developed this theology under the definition of "love of God and love of fellow man." This line of thinking ran throughout his whole work.<sup>26</sup>

This foundation of love in Wesleyan Theology contributed to the spiritual dynamic that the Wesleyan Movement achieved. This, in turn, allows the movement to now be classified as one which refers to an experience that forms a network of relationship between God and man.

Regarding this dynamic of love, Cox comments:

Wesley defines what it is to love God. It is "to delight in Him, to rejoice in his will, to desire continually to please him, to seek and find our happiness in Him, and to thirst day and night for a fuller enjoyment of Him." This kind of love for God does not forbid other delights. One is to love his neighbor as himself, and to love God's other creatures. These other loves prepare us for then enjoyment of God. Such a perfect love for God enables one to "rejoice evermore, to pray without ceasing, and in everything to give thanks." The fruit of this kind

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<sup>24</sup> Mildred Bangs Wynkoop. A Theology of Love, (Kansas City: Beacon Hills Press, 1972), p.78.

<sup>25</sup>. Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>26</sup>. Ibid., p. 16.

of love is the "one thing needful for all true Christians.

This love for God is not developed out of any natural endowment of man. It clearly is a gift of God given by the Holy Spirit. The "natural man is entirely without Christian love." Love must come from above and man's love must be born of God's love." Agape is first God's love for man, but it begets a divine love in man for God. This love is perfect when all opposing loves are gone.<sup>27</sup>

This love that allows man to see the glory of God in Christ Jesus, is the kind that Wesley was seeing face to face: he who verily loves God will try his best to do His will on earth as it is done in Heaven. He is happy in doing this will. Lindstrom contends that Wesley reconciled the idea of the law with an evangelical approach. The "law and the gospel are simply two different points of view." If a command is regarded as an order, it is viewed as law; if it is seen as a promise, it is a part of the gospel. "Thus every commandment in the Scripture is a veiled promise." What God asks a man to do, he can do by the grace given. Love prompts him to do this asking, and his effort is gladly put forth.<sup>28</sup>

Wesley envisioned great things for this perfect love:

This love we believe to be the medicine of life, the never failing remedy for all the evils of a discovered world, for all the miseries and vices of men. Wherever this is, there are virtue and happiness going hand in hand...

This religion we long to see established in the world, a religion of love, and joy, and peace, heaving its seat in the heart, in the inmost soul, but ever showing itself by its fruits; continually springing

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27. Cox. p. 114.

28. Ibid., p. 115.

forth, not only in all innocence, (for love worketh no ill to this neighbor,)like likewise in every kind of beneficence, spreading virtue and happiness all around it.<sup>29</sup>

This central core of love that came to permeate the whole Wesleyan movement allowed Wesleyan Theology to express several very interesting things:

1. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son.
2. Jesus gave himself for the human being.
3. In Mark 12:28 Jesus gives a resume of the law: "total love to God and love to neighbor."
4. Paul in outlining the ethical structure of the Christian life, peaks his argument with the same command. He said the commands "are all summed up in the one rule, 'love your neighbor as yourself.' Love cannot wrong a neighbor, therefore the whole law is summed up in love" (Rom 13: 9-10. NEB).<sup>30</sup>

Dr. Wynkoop also describes with merited depth the characteristics that are implied in the theology of love:

1. Love is deeper than the popular concept of it. Love in the biblical sense, and in Wesley's understanding of it, is a profound correction of the popular, modern concept of love. It must be distinguished sharply from these romantic, soft, erotic, paternalistic, permissive, emotional

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<sup>29</sup>. Ibid., p. 115.

<sup>30</sup>. Mildred Bangs. p. 26.

connotations. Love includes every aspect of human relationship but it also structures these relationships in a different way than is done in modern thought.

2. Love implies ethics. As holiness is characterized by love, it is then ethically structured. This is much different from "moralism" and must not be confused with that kind of superficiality.

3. Love is a uniquely personal thing. The full measure of its meaning is limited to "persons," and in a large measure defines "person." Love demands the concept of the dynamic in personhood.

4. Love is "happiness" (in Wesley's sense of the word). Happiness is not an emotional titillation but a harmony of the whole of the self.

5. Love is never superficial. It always deal with key issues. It sorts out the central from peripheral matters in its zeal to create and preserve the true relationship.

6. Love "sturdies" the soul. Christian love is not weak, spineless, without character. It is precisely the courage, and stability of one pure heart.

7. Love is creative. Creation in the midst of the tensions and conflicts of life is the essence of the kind of love Wesley, and the Bible, talk about.<sup>31</sup>

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31. Ibid., pp. 27-30.

Returning to Wesley's world perspective it should be noted that he managed to unify his theological concept of grace, justification, the new birth and the unsurpassing love of God to move confidently forward toward the doctrine of sanctification. As in many powerful religious awakenings, there were revolutionary changes in the religious situation in England by the evangelical revival.<sup>32</sup>

A radical thing about the Wesleyan doctrine of holiness or Christian perfection was that, unlike the Reformers, Wesley believed it was possible for everyone, not only for monks or nuns. Under this evangelical influence in Wesley's day religion became directly available to the masses, rather than being mediated to them through the church, or the hierarchy, or even the presbytery.<sup>33</sup>

It is clear that for Wesley, when a person truly believed he was justified, regenerated, and initially sanctified. Justification is the forgiveness of sins and acceptance with God. It is a work done for the individual who believes. In the same instant he is born again, renewed, changed from death to life. This regeneration is a "real change" and is a work done in the believer. At the

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32. Mildred Bangs Wynkoop. John Wesley: Christian Revolutionary. (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1970), p.32.

33. George Allan Turner. Christian Holiness, in Scripture, in Story, and Life. (Kansas City, Beacon Hill Press, 1977). p. 31.

same moment there is a deliverance from sinning, a breaking of the power of sin, and a beginning of holiness of perfection. this last can be properly classified as initial sanctification.<sup>34</sup>

Wesley makes an excellent theological survey that shows how this work of holiness or sanctification begins with prevenient grace and continues until the final act of glorification.

Salvation begins with what is usually termed (and very properly) preventing grace: including the first wish to please God, the first transient conviction of having sinned against him. All these imply some tendency towards life; some degree of salvation; the beginning of a deliverance from a blind, unfeeling heart, quite insensible of God and the things of God. Salvation carries on by convincing grace, usually in Scripture termed repentance; which brings a larger measure of self knowledge, and a farther deliverance from the heart of stone. Afterwards we experience the proper Christian salvation; whereby, "through grace," we "are saved by faith;" consisting of those two grand branches, justification and sanctification. By sanctification we are saved from the guilt of sin, and restored to the favor of God; by sanctification we are saved from the power and root of sin, and restores to the image of God. All experience as well as Scripture, show this salvation to be both instantaneous and gradual. It begins the moment we are justified, in the holy humble, gentle, patient love of God and man. It gradually increases from that moment, as " a grain of mustard seed, which, at first, is the least of al seeds," but afterwards puts forth large branches, and becomes a great tree; till, in another instant, the heart is cleansed from all sin, and filled with pure love to God and man. But even that love increases more and more, till we "grow up in all things into Him that is our Head,; till we attain "the measure of the statue of the fullness of Christ".<sup>35</sup>

This sanctification of internal life is an act of the

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34. Cox. p. 63.

35. Works. VI. p. 509.

Holy Spirit. It is a powerful and marvelous act of the Holy Spirit that has to be seen with fullness. It is important to note some points because of the role the Holy Spirit plays in Wesleyan Theology and in the Wesleyan movement.

The Holy Spirit is called holy not only because He is God but because, as the Scriptures reveal, He communicates God's own nature to His children. He imparts the life of love through the life of Jesus Christ who dwells in them by the Spirit's own presence and power. Holiness, in relation to God, Wesley understood as a verb as well as an adjective. The Spirit is the Spirit of Christ. Wesley regarded this promised Holy Spirit as the one who will finally restore the true and whole hearted love of God in the hearts of all who will believe on Jesus Christ as one of the great salvation themes of both the Old and the New Covenants.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>. Dieter. p. 28.

## Background of Costa Rican Reality

1. It is obvious that the national church, throughout its process as mission, conference, and finally as an autonomous church, has been unable to establish a solid, pragmatic platform of clarifying its mission, wherein there exists a parallel development between preparation and proclamation of the Gospel.

2. It was, instead, product of a spontaneous process motivated by a foreign, albeit religious and ideological, mindset that in fact isolated the church. This foreign mindset was not guided by an objectivity that developed in light of the church's internal situation, much less oriented toward the specific, Costa Rican community.

3. Jesus, in His labor of proclamation and extension of His Kingdom on Earth, developed an entire preparatory plan. He prepared twelve disciples whom he would later send out in the power of the Holy Spirit to give living testimony, incarnate in history in facts and words that were pregnant with the unequivocal marks of Jesus who preached, taught, and healed.

4. For this reason, upon examination of the internal history of the Methodist Church in Costa Rica, it became necessary to take into consideration all that is related to our marvelous heritage of the Wesleyan movement. The internal process of experience has generated gross distortions that, in the last few years, has flourished as "Liberation Theology." The effect of this movement has

been one of waste: a loss of time, leadership and of short-sightedness of vision for the purposes that as a church we need to accomplish.

5. Suffering distortion and weakness, this small faction of the Body of Christ senses the urgency of recovering fully the Wesleyan heritage in its biblical theology and its experience that moves toward solid development in its educational ministry in the Church. This is in order to fulfill the extent of its evangelistic task.

### III. The Pastoral Praxis and Evangelism

The Wesleyan movement was extremely zealous for evangelization; that is to say, Wesley longed for every creature to come to a knowledge of the Word. We have seen in Wesley this world view and his complete willingness to see the world as "his parish."

In a penetrating chapter of his Payton lectures on the preacher's portrait, John R. W. Stott insists, after a close examination of the New Testament evidence, that in distinctly Christian preaching proclamation and appeal are inseparable.<sup>37</sup>

While there should be no appeal without proclamation, there should equally be no proclamation without appeal. The invitation is the necessary outcome of the declaration.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> John R. Scott. The Preacher's Portrait. pp. 48-51

<sup>38</sup>. Ibid., p.50

"It is not enough to teach the gospel; we must urge men to embrace it."<sup>39</sup> This approach was characteristic of Wesley's actions and is seen in his sermons.<sup>40</sup>

Wesley was aggressive in the evangelistic task. As an evangelist, he knew that his main task was to persuade men.<sup>62</sup> Wesley's preaching was of such Biblical content that it was free to reach directly the person who heard the Word. His words and his style were known for their simplicity and sincerity. But there was something more in Wesley's preaching in this dimension. S. Wood writes,

"In this combination of heat and light lay the secret of Wesley's power as a gospel preacher. It was in the tension of the two that the Spirit worked so mightily."<sup>41</sup>

In answer to the question, "what is the best general method of preaching?" This reply is given: (1) to invite; (2) to convince; (3) to offer Christ; (4) to build up, and to do this in some measure in every sermon.<sup>42</sup> Wesley sought to exercise an influence on the conscience and the will. In all this he recognized the primary work of the Spirit's operation.<sup>43</sup>

The strength of Wesley's preaching seemed to reflect the voice of the Apostle Paul: "When I came

<sup>39</sup> Wood. p. 157

<sup>40</sup>. Juan Wesley. Sermones. Vol.I. 1738., p. 14.

<sup>41</sup>. Wood., p. 157.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 157.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 159.

to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power" (1 Cor. 2:1-5).

From John Wesley's diary we read, "I offer Christ;"

"I offer the grace of God;" "I offer the redemption that is in Christ Jesus;" "I proclaim the name of the Lord;" "I proclaim Christ crucified;" "I proclaim the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ;" "I proclaim salvation;" "I exhort the weak and the abandoned to go this way;" "I begin by calling sinners to repentance;" "I invite all who are guilty to, as sinners, receive divine assistance"<sup>44</sup>.

Herein lies the evidence, with no reserves of any kind, that the fervor and conviction of his proclamation was to offer Christ crucified in the midst of a people that required redemption from their sins before God.

As J. W. Bready so aptly comments, "the bases of the movement were ethical, practical, and experimental more than systemized doctrine, theories, or metaphysics."<sup>45</sup>

John Wesley accompanied this development of proclamation with what is termed pastoral care, something which became the praxis that served as guide to the Wesleyan movement. In the same way today people are seeking to develop methods to maintain the results of evangelistic work.

Wesley's pragmatism corresponded remarkably to today's

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 159.

<sup>45</sup> Bready. p. 202.

Church Growth Movement. Wesley's approach even became "research based", employing rudimentary versions of what became "qualitative behavioral science research methods." For instance, Wesley practiced rigorous observation. His power for observing crowds (even while preaching) astonishes. He observed classes, societies, towns, hecklers and detractors, leaders, human behavior, parish churches, etc. He also gathered data through thousands of interviews with local Methodist leaders, new Methodists, local opinion leaders, people with needs and so on. He welcomed and received reports from Methodist leaders from across the movement. And over the years, Wesley recorded, in a Journal, his observations, interview learning and many reports from others. These recorded studies stretched into multiple volumes.<sup>46</sup>

It is noteworthy that Wesley had an enormous sense of care for that growth process. John Wesley pioneered and mastered the church growth principle called today (for want to a better general term) "the multiplication of units." He was instrumental in the spawning of many hundreds of classes, bands, societies, and other groups with their distinct agendas, and he labored to develop the indigenous lay leadership this growing vast network of groups would need. He was driven to multiplying "classes" for these served best as recruiting groups, ports of entry for new

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<sup>46</sup>. International Bulletin. Vol XXII, Feb.86, p.5

people, and for involving awakened people with the gospel and its power.

Much of this entire strategy can be summarized in four maxims: 1. Preach and visit in as many places as you can; 2. Go most where they want you most; 3. Start as many classes as can be effectively managed; 4. Do not preach where you cannot enroll awakened people into classes.<sup>47</sup>

There is no doubt that the Wesleyan movement represents an enormous spectrum of strategies that are important for pastoral care. John Wesley as one apostolic genius of the Christian past, still offers more strategic gold for this generation. Wesley's rationale for these practices is the following: 1) awaken people to their lostness their sins, their needs for God; 2) enroll people into class; 3) teach the awakened to expect to experience their sanctification in this life.<sup>48</sup>

In this process of attention Wesley develops a special care for class meetings that are important to consider since it offers a clear vision of that penetration with the gospel in those communities. At the same time the vision permits the growing in God's grace of all those who were coming to the acknowledgement of the love of God through Christ.

The mark of a mature Christian, therefore, was a

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47. Ibid., p.8

48. Ibid., p. 8

consistent obedience to God in which the new relationship of justifying faith was no longer interrupted by a wayward will, but firmly grounded in a service of love.<sup>49</sup>

It is evident that the Wesleyan movement initiated the firm, basic theological foundation that led directly to the assumption of that dimension of discipleship; that made possible for the believer is able to grow in saving grace.

In other words, the priority of the Wesleyan Movement was not seek a particular religious experience, but to pursue an obedient discipleship. Their commitment to the class meeting expressed belief in a salvation which gave them freedom and responsibility under God's grace. It was a supportive structure for discipleship, grounded in the realities and the common sense of living in the world; and, as we shall see, it was the muscle of the Methodist Movement.<sup>50</sup>

The class meetings were partially developed to help pay a building debts. They were organized into groups of 11-12 people apiece, with a leader over them who would collect the tithes and weekly check up on the people. As more and more people started coming under their care, the weekly meetings became hard to do on an individual level, so they started meeting in these groups.

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49. David Loves Watson. Accountable Discipleship, Discipleship Resources. Nashville. 1985. p. 33

50. Ibid., p.35

Their activity was not as deep as the bands, but they would share needs, pray, sing, and help each other out. Not only this, but they would actually work to help each other in their day-to-day needs. This tended to meet not only the need for pastoral oversight, but also the need for group fellowship.

The class organization was also different from the bands. They were divided up according to neighborhoods, although this did not always mean being close together. By 1742, Wesley started making these class meetings a requirement for membership into the societies.

A number of achievements start out for Wesley's small groups:

1. They were an aid in the salvation process/experience.
2. They provided true fellowship.
3. They used confessions of struggles and temptations to help break sin habits in people.
4. They were an aid in the sanctification process.
5. They were an aid in pastoral oversight. The results were:

- a. A growth for the group leader himself.
- b. the everyday oversight of the spiritual converts.
- c. a place for the administration of discipline, since the leaders knew the real

needs of the people.<sup>51</sup>

Of these small groups the class meeting was the core. In Wesley's eye this was the keystone of the entire Methodist edifice, as Piette rightly reminds us. At first Wesley attempted to examine the classes himself, but soon he had to delegate the supervision to leaders, and thus the organization of under-shepherds to the flock was inaugurated. As a system of pastoral care, especially for the newly-converted, it was ideal. The class was the disciplinary unit of the society. It was the responsibility of a leader

to see each person in his class, once a week at least, in order to inquire how their soul prospered; to advice, reprove, comfort, or exhort, as the occasion might require; to receive what they were willing to give toward the relief of the poor.<sup>52</sup>

Wesley moved people toward a life of growth and maturity, and that impelled him to develop that disciplinary life in relationship with God. It is a great mistake to suppose that original Methodism has as its inspiration either a rollicking "revival service," or an informal group-fellowship, writes John Lawson. "Methodism was altogether more severe and less popular." It was every part a religion of exact discipline.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>. Dr. Allan Coppedge, Class Notes, "Theology of John Wesley," 1986.

<sup>52</sup> Wood. p. 191

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 186

This element in Wesley's organization stemmed from Scripture and the primitive church, as did so much else in his teaching. He noted: "the soul and body make a man. The spirit and discipline make a christian".<sup>54</sup>

In his dynamic system of pastoral care, Wesley insisted that the means of grace were indispensable to the Christian life. They were a necessity because God had ordained them to be the ordinary and scriptural way of receiving His grace. His insistence on the means of grace was grounded in the scripture. For God hath in Scripture ordained prayer, reading or hearing, and receiving the Lord's Supper, as the ordinary means of conveying his grace to man.<sup>55</sup>

Wesley's emphasis on the means of grace was not so much on the means themselves but on the Spirit of God working in and through them. He was careful to point out that the means of grace were worthless and empty apart from the presence of the Holy Spirit. The means of grace were essentially nothing more than channels through which God's grace worked. Their only value was that they were used by God.<sup>56</sup> As Wesley described it,

All outward means whatever, if separate from the

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54. Ibid., p.187 (Journal, Vol. III, p. 490)

55. Leonard Engran Stadler, Jr. Asbury Theological Seminary. Diss D. M. 1987. John Wesley's Instituted Means of Grace in the Spiritual Formation of the Local Church. p. 50.

56. Ibid., p. 51.

Spirit of God, cannot profit at all, can not conduce, in any degree either to the knowledge or love of God...Whosoever, therefore, imagines there is any intrinsic power in any means whatsoever does greatly err, not knowing the Scriptures, neither the power of God. We know there is no inherent power, in the Words that are spoken in prayer; in the letter of scripture read, the sound there of heard and win received in the Lord's Supper, but that that it is God alone who is the giver of every good Gift, the Author of all grace; that the whole power is of Him, whereby any of these, there is any blessing conveyed to our souls.<sup>57</sup>

Wesley's instituted means of grace are highly practical and integral to the spiritual formation process in the Christian life.<sup>58</sup> He knew the central importance of the means of grace for committed discipleship, and listed them for the early Methodists in the General Rules: daily prayer, daily reading of the scriptures, regular worship, frequent sacrament of Holy Communion, temperance and fasting, Christian conversation, and meeting in Christian fellowship to "watch over one another in love." Of all these, Wesley regarded the last as perhaps the most important. Indeed, he regarded solitary Christianity as a contradiction in terms, and he constantly warned the members of the societies that they took a grave risk with their discipleship if they did not use this "prudential means of grace." Regular attendance at the weekly class meeting was an absolute requirement.<sup>59</sup>

This system of feedback reveals a great meaning that

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57. Works, V, 188.

58 L. Engram. p. 121.

59 Watson. p. 45.

Wesley had perceived, in order for someone to be a disciple or a follower of Jesus. On the theme of the cost of discipleship theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer comments:

Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.

Costly grace is the gospel which must be sought again and again, the gift which must be asked for, the door at which a man must knock. Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It costs because it costs a man's life, and its grace because it gives a man the only true life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life.<sup>60</sup>

The development of discipleship properly interpreted not only permitted the spiritual growth of the people, but it also prepared, educated, and formed them to develop that evangelistic task.<sup>61</sup>

The missionary task that was expanding demanded personnel. There was only one solution, to graft the dried trunk of the official ministry with a lay ministry created by the revival itself. Wesley, normally ... reserved, came to accept this innovation and others.<sup>62</sup> After listening to one of his lay preachers preach Wesley exclaimed: It is the

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<sup>60</sup>. Dietrich Bonhoeffer. El Costo del Discipulado. pp. 36-37.

<sup>61</sup> Gonzalo Báez Camargo. Genio y Espíritu del Metodismo Wesleyano. (México. 1962), p. 91.

<sup>62</sup>. Mateo Lellievre. Juan Wesley su Vida y Obra. (Casa Nazarena. Kansas City. 1979), pp. 107-108.

Lord!"<sup>63</sup>

This is now the Methodist lay ministry was born in 1742. Very soon the organization acquired a great expansion. The societies received better attention and the evangelistic task expanded. These men formed and accepted by Wesley were simple lay pietists, who renounced of their jobs and professions to consecrated their preaching and free time.<sup>64</sup>

With this lay ministry the Wesleyan movement brought to light and dramatically incarnated the evangelical truth that all vocations can be sacred when performed for the glory of God in His service for your neighbor.<sup>65</sup>

In conclusion of this section on Wesley's system of pastoral care we note the appropriateness of Snyder's observations. Basic to God's economy "which he accomplished in Jesus Christ," head of the church, is the life and witness of the Christian community, the church. John Wesley was a radical Christian precisely because radical Christianity is not a system of doctrine but the experience of the body of Christ as a community of discipleship. Wesley learned what radical Christians today are beginning to stress: a really effective struggle for social justice begins with building a biblically faithful

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<sup>63</sup>. Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>64</sup>. Ibid., p. 109

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., Camargo p. 95.

community of Christian disciples. What the world needs now is not Radical Protestantism but radical Christianity.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>. Howard A. Snyder. The Radical Wesley, Patterns of the Church Renewal. (Francis Asbury Press, Grand Rapids. 1980), p. 165.

#### IV. Social Dimension

The impact of the social ministry of Wesleyanism in England is characterized as something that prevented what could have even been a bloody revolution. Some historians like Semmel and Harold Perkins believe that Methodism forged in its projection an impulse towards a non-violent revolution, where God permitted Wesleyanism under a creative spirit to lead English society to the seeking of a full democracy and liberty.<sup>67</sup>

During this period of the eighteenth century there was on the part of some preachers support of law, of the social order, of the monarchy and a non-violent attitude in politics.

This ..... in the English context was accompanied by a numerical growth and by an extension of Methodism. Some figures illustrate the above: during the first ten years there were 15 thousand members and 52 itinerant preachers; by 1780 figures of members in England and the United States reached 52,500 and 213 preachers, plus others without salary.

Wesley's vision regarding knowledge and the conceptualization of the gospel of Jesus Christ can be appreciated when it is understood.... clearly Wesley saw the dual ministry that the church should develop: the ministry of the Word and the ministry of service. That

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<sup>67</sup> See, Semmel's. The Methodist Revolution.

sensitivity of Wesley's ministry was apparent. Thus, workers, artisans and countrymen came to listen to him preach.<sup>68</sup>

It should be remembered that the early Methodists' passion for the people arose out of their intense love of God and neighbor. There was a systematic and two fold action of this ministry of service.

I. Assistance to immediate necessities, both internally for believers as well as for the needy in general. The message of the Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 25, or of James, became a reality in social service. We have ... already seen in the previous chapter how that pastoral service worked internally.

II. Demand for justice. In this last part it is necessary to point out that other projection that penetrates the community and that even confront situations of the country in general, which were demanding both the thought and the voice of the church.

a. Prisoners

Wesley visited and preached in jails. In spite of the state of many, he did not hesitate to call them to repentance and to the faith of Jesus Christ for their salvation. Tremendous anecdotes of events in those penal centers come out of his diary.

In the prisons in Bristol, which he visited

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<sup>68</sup> Journal. April 2, 1740.

frequently, Wesley saw significant ministry. A soldier being conducted to the scaffold was converted to God, other condemned prisoners began requesting his services, even though a magistrate by the name of Beecher opposed this request and forbid his entrance to prison. When mentioning this event in his diary, Wesley adds: "I summon Magistrate Beecher to appear before the Court of God and render account for these souls."<sup>69</sup>

It is evident that Wesley was clear on the rights of each person. In his thoughts on liberty, he expresses the following with much authority: "What is that liberty, properly so called, which every wise and good man desires? It is either religious or civil. Religious liberty is a liberty to choose our own religion, to worship God according to our own conscience, according to the best light we have. Every man living, as man, has a right when he endowed him with understanding. And every man must judge for himself, because every man must give an account of himself to God. Consequently, this is an indefeasible right: it is inseparable from humanity. And God did never give authority to any man, or number of men, to deprive any child of many thereof, under any color or pretence whatever."<sup>70</sup>

b. Temperance

Hard drinking was practiced by all classes, from the Archbishop to the most abject street sweeper. The ministers in the midst of their drunkenness excited the multitudes against Wesley and his helpers. Wesley talked with so much energy against the sale of liquors just as it should be done today against many injustices and disorders.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Idem.

<sup>70</sup> Vol. XI. P. 37 and 38.

<sup>71</sup> W. McDonald. P. 69.

He said in one of his sermons: We cannot win anything damaging our neighbors, deteriorating their bodies. Therefore, we cannot sell anything that tends to destroy their health. All who sell those products (liquor) are poisoning ....A curse hangs over them. The curse of God over those places where they live. Like those whose body and soul you have destroyed, your memory will die with you.<sup>72</sup>

c. Tobacco

One of his exhortation was, "do not use tobacco, it is unhealthy, capricious. Do not allow yourself to be subject to such a slavery" ....copy Vol VI. P. 746...."<sup>73</sup>

d. Feminine liberation

In spite of the traditions of the church of not permitting women to preach, Wesley took serious steps and permitted the ministry of many women whom God was calling. He broke the ties that had enslaved women. He led them to promise they would transform themselves as defenders of spiritual religion to say what great things had God done for the soul.<sup>74</sup>

e. Slavery

He wrote his Thoughts on Slavery. In this he discussed energetically the iniquity man commits when reducing another man to slavery. In one of his prayers, he was able to exclaim:

O God of love! You who are kind with all men and who pour his mercy on all your works; You who are the Father of all spirits and of all flesh and who are bountiful in mercy for all. You have made

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<sup>72</sup> Mark. Vol. I. P. 344.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. McDonald. P. 70.

<sup>74</sup> McDonald. P. 71.

from one same blood all the nations of the earth, have mercy on those discarded by men, who are stepped on as if they were dung! Rise and help those who lack shelter and whose blood is spilled like water over the earth! Are they not also the work of Your hands and have they not been bought with the blood of Your own Son? Move them so they may also claim to You in the same earth of their captivity, and may their complaints reach Your presence; that their moans be heeded; make that those same persons who have reduced them to captivity have compassion on them and turn them out of captivity like the cold from the South.

Oh! break in pieces all their chains, and specially the chains of their sins! You, Lord of men, liberate them, and they will truly be free!<sup>75</sup>

We can see here sensitivity in the face of evil.

Wesley observes the liberation of slaves through the action of God and the good will of human beings. When Wesley denounced before his country the crime of slavery, the public conscience had not been awakened by that matter and Christians themselves had not reflected on their seriousness. Even if he was not formally involved in the movement, Wesley supported the campaign for abolition of slavery, especially towards the end of his life. One of his last letters is addressed to William Wilberforce, the campaign's champion, saying to him: "follow in the name of God and in the force of his power, until even American slavery (the worst there exists) disappears before the power of God."<sup>76</sup>

It is also worth pointing out that it was not possible

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<sup>75</sup> Wesley. Works. Vol.XI, p. 79.

<sup>76</sup>. Wesley Letter. Vol.XIII. p. 153.

for Wesley to separate sanctity as a personal quality from social responsibility. For Wesley the conduct of Christians should take very seriously responsibility towards work, honesty, personal improvement by education or by work itself, etc. He recognized that his emphasis on discipline and frugality, would inevitably lead man to prosperity and he saw in this a constant danger because wealth is the greatest temptation for Christians. It would have been possible for him to become rich because of all the books he published; yet he devoted all that money to preaching.<sup>77</sup>

g. Poverty

When Wesley addressed poverty, his attack was strong. He saw poverty as a result of the inequality in the distribution of the fruits of industry. To avoid this he believe luxury must be avoided, and unemployment must be eliminated. He began with the fact that everything belongs to God, so that Christians, after covering their own necessities (that for Wesley were always simple) have to give, not 10%, nor 50%, but all. If not they would be stealing not only from God but also from the poor. As a result the Methodists were taking up offerings to alleviate the poor, trying to find work for the unemployed, establishing a loans found, and visiting the sick and

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 170.

prisoners.<sup>78</sup>

After Methodism became a different denomination, Associations called "Friend of the Stranger" were established, to assist persons in need. Persons assisted without considering their religious background, and persons of all denominations could take advantage of the church's fund. The Methodists themselves they had their own fund in the Church to help members. These associations were a very important contribution to social service.

In conclusion it is evidenced that the proclamation of the gospel to world like his own parish led Wesley to take the gospel with its full implications to each person and community where he preached. The example of the Wesleyan movement is an excellent alternative of what is the love of Jesus Christ incarnated in his children can do. It also established that the gospel of Jesus Christ is sufficient to change and transform society without having to alter the plan of salvation that God has provided through Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

It is evident that Wesley was successful in a work of direct and immediate assistance according to the person's material necessities. But he also used preaching, plus paper and pen aggressively and systematically to prophetically announce God's justice among human beings.

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 171.

### Summary

Wesley's theological perspective, that did not move within a systematic frame, did open integral vision of the gospel of Jesus Christ in all its splendor. Wesley looked at that Jesus Christ who incarnated himself and developed the necessary identity with humanity. In the midst of the misery of sin and moving away that human beings had before God, Wesley was able to extract from the biblical revelation. He did not see groups, but rather the calling to the restoration of life. A life that would produce equality, joy, unity, and eternal life in each person. All the above happened through the person of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

Wesley's commitment is notorious, He began with a security of life in Christ under the direction of the Holy Spirit. From the beginning of his ministry he made the decision to totally consecrate his life so that everything belonged to God and everything had to be submitted to His control, thoughts, words, and actions. That life of sanctity produced day by day his love of God and the evangelizing passion to affirm: "the world is my parish."

He rooted himself in the Bible as unique authority. This book was the basis for his preaching, for his teaching, and for his consistent praxis. Wesley was able to affirm: I am a man of only one book: the Bible.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Harper. p. 28.

Wesley was a genuine reformer who stirred up the English society in his time. But it is important to point out that his prophetic dimension was with biblical authority. Not even the forces of evil kept him from making the call to repentance to those who acted as exploiters and oppressed the poor and society. He spoke out to denounce the injustices committed. That prophetic voice was used to construct and to build, thus showing the love and righteousness God had granted to each human being. That passion for the life of others led Wesley to closely see God's great love. He said: "Love is the fulfilling of the law, the end of the commandment. It is not only the first and great command, but all the commandments in one".<sup>80</sup>

These same dynamics have led the Methodist Church in many countries to develop a work strategy that has shown that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is preached because God loves the people and is interested in their entire life.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Wesley's Book. Vol. XI. P. 367.

<sup>81</sup> Disciplina U.M.C. Referencia.

## Chapter 3

### GENESIS OF LIBERATION THEOLOGY IN LATIN AMERICA

#### I. Roots of Liberation Theology

There are continental variations of the concepts of Liberation Theology. Quite often we identify Liberation theology with Latin America, but there are also Asian expressions of it. There is the whole development of African Theology which has strong liberation elements to it; although the focus is different from that which is seen in Latin American. Black Theology, on other hand, which has developed in South African context has close affinities to the Latin American model. "In North America there is not only Black Theology, but also natural American theology, Feminist Theology and others."<sup>1</sup>

As between continents there are also variations between individuals. Moreover, we must not assume that all Latin American Liberation theologians are saying the same thing. It is true they share certain emphases, but it is a mistake to put them all together indiscriminately. Many of the most important insights on Liberation Theology as a movement in fact emerge from a careful study of the nuances of their differences.

For this reason is very important to know the historical context: in this case, the context of

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<sup>1</sup>. Ronald H. Nash. Liberation Theology. Michigan: Mott Media, 1984). p. 2.

Liberation Theology in Latin America sociologically speaking. The problems of Latin America have their roots in the period of the Iberian conquest and colonization.

To be sure, in the pre-Colombian epoch there was also violence, oppression, and even imperialism among the American Indians, as can be seen, for example, in the history of the Aztecs in Mexico and the Incas in Peru.<sup>2</sup>

Christopher Columbus was a religious man who seems to have taken very seriously the responsibility of Christianizing the people in the territories he discovered. But what the Iberians sought to implant in America was Christendom, that is to say

the European cultural, social, and political system, of which the church was only a part, and even then at the service of economic and political interests represented by the king of Spain and the people.<sup>3</sup>

It can be said of the Christianization of Latin America that in general there was an imposition of medieval, Spanish, and Roman Christianity, but no evangelization that would convert people to New Testament Christianity.<sup>4</sup> It is only fair, however, to recognize that the missionary effort of the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America had its positive side. Some missionaries dedicated themselves with great zeal and a spirit of sacrifice to the

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<sup>2</sup>. Emilio Núñez. Liberation Theology. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985). p. 78.

<sup>3</sup>. Reports of Several ISAL Conference and the ISAL Publications can be from Central Office, Uruguay, 1969).

<sup>4</sup>. Núñez. p. 78.

communication of their message. They lived among the people, learned their native languages, and were in many respects an example of the doctrine they preached. Some of those missionaries became valiant defenders of the Latin American indians in the face of the abuses committed by the colonizers. Special mention should be made of Bartolomé de las Casas, who is known in American history as "the protector of the indians".<sup>5</sup>

That there were distortions of the gospel message in the church of the colonial period no one can deny; but is also true that Christianity was not totally unknown in America when the pioneer evangelical missionaries landed on its shores.

The voice of the missionary who defended the Indians was for all practical purposes a cry in the desert. The colonizers held the concept of aristocracy, of oligarchy, and of civil and ecclesiastical hierarchy, not of democracy.

The truth of the matter is that no one spoke of democracy in those days. The populace existed to serve the interests of the large landholders, the civil and ecclesiastical officials, the crown and the church.<sup>6</sup>

The influence of the French Revolution and the independence of the United States was felt in the intellectual circles of Spanish America. Those two

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<sup>5</sup>. Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>6</sup>. Ibid., p. 18.

expressions of liberty were in a sense fruit of the Enlightenment, the intellectual current in Europe that in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries led to rationalism and deism, and on the political level to a denial of the divine right of kings.

During the French Revolution (1789-1794), the spirit of the Enlightenment expressed itself in a worship of the goddess of Reason, a determination to eliminate aristocracy and clericalism, a heightened sense of nationalism and the right of the individual, and the desire to establish a new social order based on the ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity. "Independence brought a change of rules, merely, not of the social and economic system."<sup>7</sup>

In some countries, however, the influence of political liberalism grew and brought about changes in both the legislation and the culture of Latin America. Among other things, the liberals insisted on respect for the citizen's political rights, the separation of church and state, and education free from religious control and available to all. Due to those ideas, which were saturated with a strong anti-clericalism, the liberals were seen as great enemies of the church. "The church in turn had to depend on popular religiosity in order to maintain its prestige and political power."<sup>8</sup>

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7. Ibid., p. 19.

8. Ibid., p. 19.

During the second half of the Nineteenth century, while the battle between Latin American liberals and conservatives was becoming more intense, positivism was flowering in Europe and Darwinism and Marxism were putting down their roots. Under Pius IX (1846-1878) the Roman Catholic Church made a desperate effort to maintain its political and religious influence.

The Pope condemned liberalism which in those days was his number one enemy, and declared himself infallible; but his efforts were not able to prevent the temporal loss of power for the papacy.

In the face of the onslaught of socialist ideas, Pope Leo XIII wrote in 1891 his famous encyclical Rerum Novarum, which deals with the problems of the working class and is known as the first pontifical social document in the modern world.<sup>9</sup>

During the decade of the 1960s the clamor for social change continued in Latin America. Of special interest for the study of this period is the effect of the Cuban revolution on the Latin American consciousness and on the policy of the United States toward Latin America.

The fact that Latin America's social problems have their origin in the colonial period does not justify their existence; neither is their existence justified by the fact that there are poor people in the developed countries. Regarding the last statement, it is not correct to equate, for example, poverty in North America with the poverty in Latin America; the difference is immense. Also, to say

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<sup>9</sup>. Ibid., p. 20.

that Latin Americans are lazy by nature is nothing more than a generalization.

Millions of Latin Americans work diligently from sunrise to sunset and yet remain in extreme poverty all their lives because they do not receive an adequate salary for their efforts.<sup>10</sup>

For Latin American evangelicals the problem has to do with the causes of poverty and with its cure, not with its existence, which is very evident. The deficiency in housing, health, and education is enormous. In some countries the illiteracy rate is still very high. The number of undernourished children is in the millions.

Not all Latin American children will have the opportunity to be fed well, receive medical attention, finish their studies in elementary school, enjoy healthful and instructive recreation, and move ahead in their vocations.<sup>11</sup>

One of the principal characteristics of Liberation Theology is the effort of its authors to make an in-depth study of the Latin American social problems. An important influence in the beginning of Liberation Theology is the movement of ISAL, "Church and Society in Latin America," which was the regional department of Church and Society of the World Council of Churches. This movement contributed numerous publications concerning Christianity and society which admonished the Latin American Protestant church to make a commitment to political revolution. Several of the thinkers working with these movements were Richard Shaull,

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<sup>10</sup>. Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>11</sup>. Ibid., p. 22.

Paul Lehman, Julio Santana, Emilio Castro, Miguez Bonino, etc.

ISAL has been described as the most significant Latin American Protestant antecedent to the Theology of Liberation, and as the most consistently radical Protestant Ecumenical Organization in Latin America.<sup>12</sup>

Many early leaders of ISAL came from the Christian student movement; the documents produced by the First Latin American Evangelical Consultation betrayed a dissatisfaction with the traditional Protestant application of Biblical principles to social action. Jesus's social teachings were not seen a helpful, since they were identified as "eschatological," and were thus not applicable to human action in history. They observed that the New Testament in general speaks little about the concerns of this world. The authors went on, however, to assert the following "biblical" foundations for Christian social responsibility.

1. the world is under Christ's sovereignty, even though it is not manifest;
2. social and political structures are Christ's means for preserving society so that men can have a chance to respond to the gospel;
3. the conditions necessary for response to the gospel are freedom, decent human life, and human dignity;
4. the barriers to the reception of the gospel are

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12. Ibid., p. 22.

misery, oppression, injustice, and insecurity.

5. Christian love must be expressed even in the ambiguous activities of the concrete struggles of real people;

6. Christ is active in history giving signs of the coming kingdom, liberating men and purifying this interim order;

7. The meaning of the incarnation is that God is present in every concrete historical situation;

8. God uses historical acts which appear to be human initiatives in order to carry out his plan of salvation;

9. The church must follow God's lead as he acts in history;

10. God is active today in the renovation of social structures which are unjust and corrupt; and

11. Political action should be carried out by individuals, not by the church.

José Míguez Bonino identifies the period, 1960-1965, as a time in which ISAL "oscillates between a developmentalist and a revolutionary approach"<sup>13</sup>

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13. Ibid., p. 23.

## II. Roman Catholic Background

A number of internal changes in the Roman Catholic Church's life, have set the stage for the present situation:

1. Separation of Church and State (1865-1965);
2. The Latin American Plenary Council;
3. Renewal Movements;
4. Internal Changes in the Church;
5. Latin American Roman Catholic Theologians travelling to Paris, Louvaine, Innsbruck, and other centers of theological reflection, returning to Latin America with the beginnings of "scientific and theological reflection on the Latin American context." In 1955, the General Council of the Latin American Episcopate (CELAM) was founded.<sup>14</sup>

Dussel concludes that by the opening of the decade of the Sixties, the Catholic Church has begun to experience dramatic changes which were crucial for the development of Liberation Theology.<sup>15</sup>

Catholic Liberation Theology springs from soil fertilized by the New Catholicism, a movement whose immediate origin dates from the papal rule of John XXIII, but whose deeper roots extend to the new theology that even then has been developing for several decades. In relation to Liberation Theology, we will consider in this chapter specially what may be called official New Catholicism,

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<sup>14</sup> Hundley. (Thesis)., p. 8.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid,. p. 8.

which finds expression in the documents of Vatican Council II, in the Latin American Episcopal Conferences of Medellín (1968) and Puebla (1979), and in encyclicals of John XXIII and Paul VI, the beginning pontiffs during the time when the Catholic theology of liberation was conceived.

An up-date of sorts was imperative if the Church was going to speak in a way that was relevant to the modern world. John XXIII accepted the challenge and began to work on the task of renewal. One of these critical decisions was to call an ecumenical council, a meeting of the bishops and other Catholic representatives from the whole world.

With regard to the nature of the church, Vatican II affirmed that she is "by her relationship with Christ...a kind of sacramental sign of intimate union with God, and of the unity of all mankind." She is also "the universal sacrament of salvation." Of great importance also was the teaching of Vatican II on the church as the Body of Christ. It had its roots in the encyclical Mystici Corporis of Pius XII (1943), which stated that Christ establishes the Body on earth "as a visible structure," and that there is therefore a need for a hierarchical organization.

However, Vatican II opens the door for an ecumenism that encompasses much more than the groups that profess to be Christian. That Dogmatic Constitution of the Church states that The Christian Mission consists of "communicating to men the fruits of salvation" and making an effort to meet the needs of the poor and the suffering

in whom the church recognizes "the likeness of her poor and suffering Founder." The objective of the Christian mission is spiritual and cultural, or social.

On other hand, the Catholic Church also imitated the revolutionary change: when the Second Vatican Council convened on the First of October, 1962, 601 Latin American bishops were present as participants. The Council marks a dividing line in the history of the Roman Catholic Church, in Latin America and worldwide. Its constitutions, decrees and declarations on subjects such as the lay apostolate, the church in the modern world, and the renewal of religious life, have had a profound impact on the Latin American Church. "They are often quoted by Liberation Theologians."<sup>16</sup>

The theology of Liberation Theology is a post-conciliar theology. It originated in 1965, the same year that a Vatican Council ended. But it is more than a post-conciliar theology in the usual sense of the word, for its primary concern is not to up-date the Church, but to reflect upon and stimulate action in the present revolutionary process in the light of the Church's documents of faith. Its concern is not intra-ecclesiastical formation. Thus, it has concentrated upon Social Encyclical which deal with the open windows of the church to the world, and upon those aspects of the

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16. Nuñez. pp. 83-90.

Encyclicals which seems to promise a new methodological approach to the concrete problems of a world radically divided between the rich and the poor.

Extremely significant for Latin America has been the open document written in the light of *Populorum Progressio* by fifteen bishops speaking on behalf of the Third World nations. In this, they affirm that the "peoples of the Third World are the proletariat of today's humanity;" that the Church must not be "attached to financial imperialism;" that poverty deprived of its social and monetary privileges, that should unite itself with all the exploited in defense of the recovery of their rights. "Liberation Theology sets out to reflect on the theological significance of such statements."<sup>17</sup>

In this new birth we find that people like Bishop Helder Camara were involved, evidence of great encouragement as he denounced opposition and violence and called for a peaceful "spiral of violence" in the Third World.

Injustices have produced subhuman living conditions for the poor; this "established violence" attracts violence in the form of revolution, which in turn leads to the violence of repression <sup>18</sup>.

Another important thinker is Paulo Freire, from

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17. J. Andrew Kirk, Liberation Theology: An Evangelical View from the Third World, (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1979), pp. 2-3.

18. Hundley, p. 12.

Brazil. He was among the founders of the popular culture movement in Recife. Freire was the first to employ his controversial conscientious method, that is, the goal of enabling the illiterate to recognize the oppressive societies in which they live, while they learn to read.

Two other men Ernesto Cardenal, from Nicaragua and Camilo Torres, from Colombia were also significant figures. In 1961, the Colombian Episcopate published a declaration condemning violence in Colombia and urging steps toward peace be taken. Torres is significant because he left the church and joined Marxist guerrilla forces in the Colombian mountains.

Torres explained, "The love of my neighbor has moved me to join the revolution." In 1966, Camilo Torres was killed in a battle with Colombian troops.<sup>19</sup> For many liberationists, Torres' death was "transformed into a universal symbol" of sacrificial Christian love expressed through violent revolution.<sup>20</sup>

From the evangelical perspective the Church associates but never identifies with human liberation and salvation in Jesus Christ, because it knows by revelation, by historical experience and by reflection of faith, that not all notions of liberation are necessarily coherent and compatible with an evangelical vision of man. It is also aware that it was not called to instigate liberation, create welfare and development for the kingdom of God to come about.

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19. Ibid., p. 34.

20. Ibid., p. 34.

Furthermore, the Church is fully convinced that all temporal and political liberation, no matter how much it may pretend to be the theology today, carries within itself the seed of its own negation and falls short of the ideal which it itself proposes.

The Church cannot accept violence, above all, that armed force which is uncontrollable when unleashed -- nor the death of whomever it might be -- as the road to liberation, because it knows that violence inexorably begets new forms of oppression and slavery.

However, there has already been an awakening of the revolutionary consciousness within the Church, and it seems impossible that it could in any way reverse its own history.<sup>21</sup>

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21. Núñez, pp. 109-110.

### III. Protestant Influence on Liberation Theology

When referring to the influence that Protestantism had on Liberation Theology, its frame of reference is clearly within the ecumenical movement in Latin America. It is this movement that directly contributes the key concept of developing a conscience sensitive to the social reality. Later on it added fundamental reflections on political involvement, which eventually led to a definite political agenda. Historian Jean Pierre provides an excellent perspective regarding this ecumenical movement in Latin America.

With the creation of the Commission Iglesia y Sociedad en América Latina (ISAL) in 1961, Federation students such as Julio de Santa Anna, Richard Shaul, José Miguez Bonino, Hiber Conteris, Emilio Castro and Ruben Alves, found an adequate place to follow their reflections articulating social and theological responsibility. In 1959, the Studies Department of the World Council of Churches established a secretary's office in Latin America that distributed the bulletin entitled "Iglesia y Sociedad en América Latina." In 1961, they were summoned to a council that was held a few days before CELA in Huampaní, Perú, and which grouped delegates from 17 Latin American countries and 14 evangelical denominations.

The first result was the provisional creation of the Junta Latinoamericana de Iglesia y Sociedad (ISAL) that was constituted as a movement six months later in Sao Paulo, Brazil, receiving support from seven church federations. Since then, and until 1973, ISAL was the most important ecumenical organization in Latin America. It developed a theology and a critical social thought in order to awaken the social responsibility of Christians.

ISAL drew its strength from the geographical and socio-cultural homogeneity of its members. They were fundamentally white, intellectual, and young individuals of Protestant origin. Gathered in the corridor Sao Paulo, Montevideo, Buenos Aires,

the World Council of Churches put in its hands the economic means to assure its company: the magazine, Cristianismo y Sociedad, was born. It was founded by the "Tierra Nueva" publishing house; its international workshops and the secretarial position were financed. ISAL's intellectual movement developed a Christian thought attuned to human sciences, in order to define Christian commitment. That story can be very clearly read in Cristianismo y Sociedad.<sup>22</sup>

Commenting on ISAL, Dr. Nuñez notes that in the sociological analysis of Latin American reality, the ISAL's theologians use of Block's and Marcuse's esoteric Marxism stands out. From the sociological analysis and the theological reflection within the frame of secularization, ISAL's people came to affirm that the dialogue between Christian faith and revolutionary ideologies is necessary,

Because ideology was the adequate vehicle of the political and of the 'praxis,' that is, the means to assume the commitment and the action of social transformation in the sense that it is determined by history's theological interpretation.<sup>23</sup>

Actually, it becomes evident that contextual theology will be analyzed under Marxist criteria.

Dr. Nuñez says that according to C. René Padilla's thinking, "The starting point of theology is the Latin American situation, but it is seen through the lens of Marxist analysis."<sup>24</sup>

Various factors that paved the way for the development

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Bastian, Jean Pierre. Breve Historia del Protestantismo en América Latina. CUPSA. P. 159.

23. Dr. Nuñez, P. 51.

24. Ibid., p. 51.

of the ISAL can be identified: the success of the Cuban Revolution and the new theological concepts advocated by Richard Shaull, who introduced the thinking of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Paul Lehmann into the debate. The Cuban Revolution of 1959 has been called "the most decisive event in modern Latin American history" by Orlando Costas, who believes that it has become the model for all Latin American nations in their struggle for political change. The relative success of the Cuban Revolution demonstrated to Latin Americans that

1. the United States would tolerate a Marxist government in Latin America,
2. Christianity could coexist with Marxism, and
3. there was a possibility of seeing Marxist revolution as the most effective means for expressing Christian love to the poor and exploited. The ISAL leaders began making regular trips to Cuba after the revolution, returning with glowing accounts of the "new paradise" being constructed there. Many of the ISAL members who had questions as to whether or not revolution was practical for Latin America in the face of U.S. dominance in the Americas saw the triumph of Marxist revolution in Cuba as an affirmative answer to their questions.

Richard Shaull arrived in Colombia as a Presbyterian missionary in 1942. He served there until 1951, then moved to Brazil where he taught in the Presbyterian Seminary in Campinas. Through his association with students in the Student Christian Movement of Latin America, who were actively committed to revolution, Shaull became

more and more radical in his political and theological views. He came to see revolution as the only hope for Latin America and dedicated a great deal of his efforts trying to convince the ISAL theologians to make the same commitment. Shaul tried to prove that the God of the Bible is a God of liberation and that He is always on the side of the liberators against the oppressors.<sup>25</sup>

The participation of Rubén Alves, who was Richard Shaul's disciple at the Seminary in Brazil, should also be mentioned.

"His article "Injusticia y Rebelión", affirms that: (1) the underdeveloped nations of the Third World are maintained in economic dependency by the rich nations who derive their wealth from exploiting the poorer nations, (2) the hidden problem of Latin America which generates its suffering is a "class struggle" between the poor proletariat and the rich capitalists, (3) the essence of both Christianity and Marxism is humanization therefore, Christians and Marxists can unite to reach their common goal, (4) God does not reveal Himself in the Scriptures, but in the events of modern history such as the search for human liberation, (5) God is at work in the Marxist revolutionary movement to bring His kingdom to Latin America, and (6) the Church should join the Marxists to bring about the revolution. These six points are still the basic tenets of radical Liberation Theology.<sup>26</sup>

The influence of the consciousness method that was developed by the Brazilian Catholic theologian Paul Freire regarding reflection and praxis was also of vital importance to ISAL. "Freire's method was made known especially by the literacy program for adults that grew

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<sup>25</sup> Hundley, Ray. Radical Liberation Theory. P. 7.

<sup>26</sup>. Hundley. Op. cit., P. 9.

rapidly in 1961."<sup>27</sup>

Paul Freire, when developing his method, emphasizes with great precision the importance of education, as the practice of liberty. "His method was to educate through consciousness-raising. He also maintained the criterion that society was divided in oppressors and the oppressed."<sup>28</sup>

The dynamics of consciousness-raising are a vital part of the Liberation Theology, and become a major strategy for ISAL.

Dr. Costas considered ISAL "the most consciously radical Protestant ecumenical organization in Latin America." "It has also been the most influential and at the same time the most controversial in the Churches."<sup>29</sup>

"Therefore the ecumenical movement, as Jean Pierre calls it, is situated at the movement of ideological vanguard and is linked to the revolutionary processes."<sup>30</sup>

In an Evangelical evaluation mentioning other theologians, Dr. Núñez says,

In ISAL's ideology, God is translated as revolution. God's people, as revolutionary hosts. God's purpose as humanization and the Word of God as the revolutionary writings. Nobody escapes the

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27. Núñez. Op., cit. P. 53.

28. Núñez. Ibid., P. 54.

29. Arias, Mortimer. El Clamor del Pueblo. P. 112.

30 Jean Pierre. Op. cit. P. 158.

fact that everything is Marxist humanism.<sup>31</sup>

As a result, "ISAL has to be recognized as a movement that has challenged Latin American Evangelical Christianity."<sup>32</sup>

Just as Liberation Theology states later, ISAL's summons to a reflection on the context led to a concrete commitment to make the theology an instrument of transformation. Therefore, although ISAL no longer exists as a movement, its influence is presently felt in Liberation Theology.

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31. Ibid., p. 77.

32 Núñez. Ibid. P. 76.

#### IV. Officialization of Liberation Theology

We can affirm that these antecedents prepared the way for the official appearance of Liberation Theology. The official date marking the appearance of Liberation Theology is 1968.

In August, 1968, the Second General Episcopal Conference of Roman Catholic Bishops (CELAM) was held in Medellin, Colombia. From that conference the theological meaning of "liberation" began to take shape. Medellín was the first instance in which a significant portion of the Roman Catholic hierarchy had acknowledged the structural nature of evil and had analyzed violence as a component of the unjust structures. The conference was designed to examine the Latin American Church in light of the Second Vatican Council.

In the three conferences that followed, a number of social issues and problems were addressed. The underdevelopment of Latin America was described as "an unjust situation which promotes tensions that conspire against peace."<sup>33</sup> When speaking of injustice, we refer to those realities that constitute sinful situations; this does not mean, however, that we are overlooking the fact that at times the misery in certain countries can have natural causes which are difficult to overcome. From the Medellín documents we can observe some of these

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<sup>33</sup>. Donald K. McKim. What Christians Believe About The Bible, (New York: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985), p. 128.

resolutions:

1. If development is the new name for peace, Latin American underdevelopment, with its own characteristics in the different countries, constitutes an unjust situation which promotes tensions that conspire against peace.
2. There are different forms of alienation: socio-economic, cultural, political, racial, religious, in urban as well as rural sectors.
3. Extreme inequality among social classes.
4. Growing frustrations.
5. Forms of oppression of dominant groups and sectors.
6. Power unjustly exercised by certain dominant sectors.
7. Growing awareness of the oppressed sectors.
8. International tensions and external neocolonialism. This refers, particularly, to the implications for countries that are dependent on a center of economic power. It is obvious that this will not fail to have political consequences given the interdependence of these two areas. It is important to emphasize two aspects of this phenomenon.
  - 1-A: The economic aspect.
    - a. Growing distortion of international commerce.

b. Rapid flight of economic and human capital.

c. Tax evasion and loss of gains and dividends.

d. International monopolies and international imperialism of money.

2-A. The political aspect.

9. Tensions among the countries of Latin America.

10. An exacerbated nationalism in some countries.

11. Armaments.<sup>34</sup>

There is a strong appeal for a new just social order in which man, particularly the popular classes, fully participates in the process of government, and is the subject of his history and not the arbitrary object of speculation and "profit without end."

"There is also a call for the defence of the poor and oppressed by means of grass-roots organizations which would fight for their rights."<sup>35</sup>

In this situation the oppressed must be able to determine their own condition and future and thus be liberated from "cultural, social, economic, and political servitude that oppose human development. " Yet liberation

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<sup>34</sup>. Deane William Ferm, Third World Liberation Theology, (New York: Orbis Books, 1986), pp. 3-6.

<sup>35</sup>. Kirk. p. 28.

is set forth in a Christian context in that it is "an anticipation of the complete redemption of Christ" and peace is "the fruit of love," since "love is the soul of justice." The Medellín Conference represents what has been called the "formulation of the theology of Liberation" (1968-1972)."<sup>36</sup>

It is worth keeping in mind that Gustavo Gutiérrez, without a doubt the best known of the theologians of liberation, was one of the theological consultants for CELAM, and "at Medellín he was a member of one of the most important task forces, the Peace Commission."<sup>37</sup>

Medellín marks a highly significant watershed. E. Dussel sums up the achievements of Medellín: Medellín uses the language of liberation, it speaks of dependence, domination, international monetary imperialism and allows us to begin to think differently. It is situated on the road leading from "developmentalism."

A new posture is to be found which rapidly influences theology and creates a new language, a whole new economic, political and, of course, theological interpretation of liberation.<sup>38</sup>

After Medellín other important events took place; for example, in 1971 a group of eighty Chilean priests (Los Ochenta) issued a statement calling for their bishops to relate their Christianity to political commitment in

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<sup>36</sup>. McKin. p., 128

<sup>37</sup>. Núñez. p. 100.

<sup>38</sup>. Kirk. p.28.

socialist terms. From this group came the plans for the April, 1972, meeting in Santiago, Chile.

In comparison to the Medellín Conference, it can be said that if the distance between Vatican II and Medellín constitutes a step, the distance between Medellín Conference and the Santiago Conference of Christians for socialism resembles a leap.<sup>39</sup>

Medellin hoped that love, working for justice could provide solutions, while Santiago argued that love is not a historic force apart from engagement in the class struggle. Medellín offered a theoretical analysis of Marxism, while Santiago called for Christians to "form a strategic alliance with Marxists." At Medellín the theologians were summoned by the bishops, "at Santiago they were summoned by the militia."<sup>40</sup>

In this embryonal process of Liberation Theology it is necessary to mention Dr. Gustavo Gutiérrez, the priest who wrote his own systematic theology in 1971. That book has been translated and distributed in different languages around the world.

In the book he describes with strong emphasis his own theology:

The theology of liberation attempts to reflect on the experience and meaning of the faith based on the commitment to abolish injustice and to built a new society; this theology must be verified by the practice of that commitment, by active, effective participation in the struggle which the exploited social classes have undertaken

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39. McKin. p. 129.

40. Ibid., p. 129.

against their oppressors. Liberation from every form of exploitation, the possibility of a more human and more dignified life, the creation of a new man--all pass through this struggle. But in the last instance we will have an authentic theology of liberation only when the oppressed themselves can freely raise their voice and express themselves directly and creatively in society and in the heart of the People of God, when they themselves "account for the hope," which they have, when they are the protagonists of their own liberation.<sup>41</sup>

Other significant Latin American liberation theologians have focused their attention on biblical studies such as:

Josè Porfirio Miranda, an ex-Jesuit, who wrote Marx and the Bible: A Critique of the Philosophy of Oppression (Eng. 1974). Hermeneutical considerations are developed by Juan Luis Segundo (b.1925), a Uruguayan Jesuit, in his book The Liberation of Theology (Eng. 1976). This was a development of initial ideas set forth in his earlier five-volume A Theology for Artisans of a New Humanity (First edition, 1968-72). Segundo emphasizes among other things that the social sciences can be valuable tools for biblical interpretation. Major Christological studies have been produced by Jon Sobrino, a Spanish Jesuit, in his Christology at the Crossroads: A Latin American Approach (Eng. 1976) and Leonardo Boff (b. 1938) in his Jesus Christ Liberator: A Critical Christology of Our Time (Eng. 1978). Perhaps the best overview of how liberation theology has developed and its themes in general has been written by the Methodist scholar José Míguez Bonino in his Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation (Eng.1975). His 1976 book Christians and Marxists: The Mutual Challenge to Revolution analyzes the interrelationship between Christianity and Marxism.<sup>42</sup>

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41. Gutiérrez. p. 157.

42. McKin. pp. 133-134.

### Summary

This chapter focuses on the history of the movement of Liberation Theology from its roots in the conquest and colonization of the new world by Spain and Portugal up until the movement became official policy in 1968 at the CELAM in Medellin, Colombia, and the subsequent-more radical- conference in Santiago, Chile. (1971).

The problems of poverty, oppression and violence are part of the Latin America culture and are the focal points of the movement its growth. CELAM (1955), Vatican II and ISAL, organizations within the church, focused on social problems and chose politically radical answers. The Enlightenment, following the French Revolution, the independence of the United States and especially the Cuban Revolution fed the fires of violence as a means to an end. Many events and theological thinkers challenged established ways of thinking with conflicting ideas and solutions.

There was never any question that social injustices should be addressed by both the church and the state, but the controversy began and continues between the traditional evangelicals who believe the Scriptures are applicable in every age and culture and the radical liberation theologians who want Christianity to merge with Marxist humanism for a socially and economically equal Latin America.

## Chapter 4

### LIBERATION THEOLOGY AND SOME OF ITS POSITIONS

The last chapter focused on a history of the movement of Liberation Theology from its roots up until the moment it became official policy for some. In this chapter we will develop some of the fundamental thoughts of the Liberation Theology: first, the role of hermeneutics and the Bible; second, salvation and liberation; third, the option for the poor; and fourth, the ecclesiological perspective.

When entering these fields, it is not with the purpose of elaborating an analysis of the Liberation Theology, but of describing the thought and the theological work that Liberation Theology develops in some of its basic tenets.

#### I. The Role of Hermeneutics and the Bible

Theologian Samuel Escobar says,

It is surprising for the evangelical reader that liberation theologians of Catholic origin in Latin America have produced a great volume of material of Biblical study.<sup>1</sup>

The method they have developed has been rigorous. The form of interpretation they apply is "from praxis". Therefore in the interpretative task of the Word the questions, "Who reads the Bible?" and "Where is it read?" (or "Where is the reader?") become fundamental. "Here lies the force of their challenge, and we have to admit they are

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<sup>1</sup>. Samuel, Escobar. La Fe Evangélica y las Teologías de Liberación. (Texas, Casa Bautista de Pub., 1987). P. 137.

legitimate questions."<sup>2</sup>

Hermeneutics plays an important role in Liberation Theology because it is an instrument that delineates not only a simple perspective but a completely different approach in the face of a traditional biblical interpretation. Regarding this field of hermeneutics, Raúl Vidales says:

From our perspective we would talk of a hermeneutics from the optics of the liberation. This work would contemplate the perspective of a transformation of concrete realities within the field of its competence and efficiency and a methodological process that would permit advance through the concrete truth, which is verified in historic facticity and advances towards final consumption.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, this hermeneutical work tends to give privileges to elements from other perspectives that were relayed to a second plane, i.e. "historical and anthropological aspects typical of Latin America."<sup>4</sup>

Dr. Gustavo Gutiérrez from his position as leader of this theological movement when referring to the hermeneutical task records his thinking as follows:

In the last instance the real interpretation of the sense kept awake by the theology is actually given in the historical praxis. The hermeneutics of the Kingdom of God-observed E. Schillebeeckx-consists above all of making a better world. We thus face a political hermeneutics of the

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2. Ibid., P. 139.

3 Gibellini, Rosino. La Nueva Frontera de la Teología en América Latina. (Salamanca, Ed. Sígueme, 1980). p. 55.

4. Ibid., p. 55.

gospel.<sup>5</sup>

It is obvious that Liberation Theology in general and in theory specifically,

makes an effort in its hermeneutical development to recover what is typical of that Jewish Christian tradition as it is expressed in the Bible; the essence of this inheritance is the saving action of God throughout history.<sup>6</sup> This hermeneutical movement takes the fertile, traditional interpretation of the church and rereads it from the perspective of the poor, in order to recast it in an innovative manner.<sup>7</sup>

Now, for noting the effects of a n increasing contrast with the evangelical thought, it is very important to know the place that Liberation Theology gives the Bible.

Liberation theologians use Scripture in a variety of ways. Its primary appeal, however, is to the Exodus event in the Old Testament. "The Exodus experience is dogmatic." As Brown puts it, "if there is a single passage that encapsulates the liberation themes of the Bible, it is the story, describing God who takes sides, intervening to free the poor and oppressed."

This event is "the center of Scripture" in that "God's saving action is focused in the Exodus, the liberation of a people from political, cultural, and religious bondage."<sup>8</sup>

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5. Gustavo Gutiérrez. Teología de la Liberación. (Salamanca, Ed. Sígueme, 1980). p. 38.

6. Victorio Araya. El Dios de los Pobres. (San José, DEL. 1983). p. 119.

7. Ibid., p. 186.

8. Donald K. McKin. What Christians Believe About the Bible. (New York: Thomas Nelson Pub., 1985). p. 136.

A second aspect of the appeal of Scripture for liberationists is the ethical teaching of the prophets. Here the concern of the prophets for the oppressed is particularly prominent. This theme is capsulized in the phrase: "To know God is to do justice" (See Jeremiah 22: 13-16). The doctrines of Eschatology and the future coming kingdom is another area of scriptural appeal for Liberation theologians.

In Liberation Theology traditional questions about revelation, inspiration, and the authority of the Scriptures are not as important as how the Bible functions within the Christian community. The Scriptures are validated continually as they are employed in the concrete action of Liberation. Scripture serves as a "foundation for freedom" in this theology because it provides the paradigms, the goals, and ultimately introduces humanity to the ultimate liberator, Jesus Christ.

Raúl Vidales adds:

the Bible, under this perspective should not be read "like the Magna letter", if not as a provocative and creative witness of our call and our mission.<sup>9</sup>

Liberation theologians appeal to various strands of Scripture including narratives, ethical teaching, and Scatology.

But central through it all is the contention that Scripture as a liberating word is powerful because it is interpreted in the context of a

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9. Gibellini. p. 55.

praxis that involves oneness with the poor and oppressed who hunger for freedom.<sup>10</sup>

We can see the importance of Juan Luis Segundo's work in this area. In his book, Liberation Theology, Segundo

says that the hour for epistemology has come, that is, the "time to get down to analyzing not so much the contents of Latin American theology, but rather its methodological approach and its connection with liberation."<sup>11</sup>

Segundo began by explaining the difference between a traditional academic theologian and a theologian of Liberation Theology and indicates that academic theology is primarily an interpretation of a book, that is, the Bible, not an interpretation of this book for man and society. It is a theology that takes into account sciences that help it understand the past, but it declares itself autonomous with regards to the sciences of the present time. The Liberation theologian, says Segundo, begins exactly in the opposite way: He "feels compelled at every step to combine the disciplines that open up the passage with the disciplines that help explain the present." In so doing, he attempts to interpret the Word of God as it is directed to us here and now. According to Segundo, "without that connection between theology and the sciences in order to understand the past, as well as the present, Liberation Theology cannot exist."<sup>12</sup>

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10. Ibid., p. 56.

11. Luis Segundo. p. 9.

12. Núñez. p. 160.

The continuing changes in our interpretation of the Bible is dictated by the continuing changes in our present-day reality, both individual and societal. "Hermeneutic" means "having to do with interpretation." The circular nature of this interpretation stems from the fact that each new reality forces us to interpret the Word of God anew, to change reality accordingly, and then go back and reinterpret the Word of God again, and so on.

In order to accomplish the hermeneutic circle in theology, two conditions are necessary. First, out of the present, there must arise questions that will force us to reconsider our usual manner of interpreting human existence and our cultural and social reality. The second condition is that theology must change its usual interpretation of the Holy Scriptures to answer the new questions that arise from the present reality. Only in that way will the hermeneutical circle be possible.

Segundo affirms that without the circle, theology is always conservative in its ways of thinking and acting. "For progressive theology on the other hand, Liberation deals not so much with contents as with the method used to theologize in the face of our real-life situation."

First, there is our way of experiencing reality, which leads us to ideological suspicion. Second, there is the application of our ideological suspicion to the whole ideological superstructure in general and to theology in particular. Third, there comes a new way of experiencing theological reality that leads us to exegetical suspicion, that is, the suspicion that the prevailing interpretation of the Bible has not taken into

account important pieces of data. Fourth, we have our new hermeneutics, that is, a new way of interpreting the fountainhead of our faith (i.e., Scripture) with the new elements at our disposal.<sup>13</sup>

The circle is complete. But because this is a circular hermeneutics, the new biblical interpretation changes reality, and the new reality in turn, produces another change in the interpretation of Scripture, and so on successively. The circle continues its movement.

Luis Segundo says that to complete the circle is not in itself "a sufficient proof of the truth of the theology in question," it is only a proof that a certain theology is alive, but that it is connected to historical reality.<sup>14</sup>

Segundo recognizes that there are many hermeneutical dangers in this method of biblical interpretation; but he seems to accept it, pointing out that "one cannot rule but a particular theological method which is consistent, just because it entails danger." Thus, the hermeneutical circle is justified along with its interpretation of the Scriptures, due to "the continuing changes in our present day reality, both individual and societal."

"Orthopraxy precedes orthodoxy as a final criterion, in theology and in the interpretation of the written word of God."<sup>15</sup>

Fundamentally, what mostly distinguishes Theology of

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p.9.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 163.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 164.

Liberation from other theologies is its method.

## II. Salvation and Liberation

For Liberation Theology salvation comes to the oppressed when he is liberated from oppression. It must be remembered that Liberation Theology is making theology from a particular context and formulates questions in the face of the situation of today's human being. This dimension leads to a practice - praxis - which transforms him in a continuous action. Gutiérrez directly addresses the question in his systematic theology as follows:

What relationship is there between salvation and the process of liberation of man throughout history? Or more exactly, what, in the light of the Word, does the struggle against an unjust society, the creation of a new man, mean?<sup>16</sup>

When referring to salvation allusion is made to the traditionalist concept that the Catholic Church has, and which corresponds "to the Salvation of the faithless."<sup>17</sup> For Gutiérrez the terms were, "on the one hand, the universality of salvation, and on the other, the visible church as its mediator."<sup>18</sup> "The traditionalist thought related to salvation is characterized as a moralist attitude and in an evasion under a cloak of spirituality

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<sup>16</sup> Gutiérrez. Page 194.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. P. 194.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. P. 195.

of this world."<sup>19</sup>

Liberation Theology will clearly center the concept of a universal salvation --or affirming the universality of salvation. Gutiérrez says, "The man who opens himself to God and to other men is saved, even if he does not have a clear consciousness of it."<sup>20</sup>

This statement is decisive because it is completely opposed to the evangelical concept which speaks in terms of a faith in Jesus Christ. In his new book Gutiérrez explains amply the universalist thought.

Men accept partial communion with God, even if they do not come to explicitly confess Christ as their Lord in the measure in which they are moved by grace.<sup>21</sup>

Salvation is like that, i.e., it becomes a communion of men with God and communion of human beings among themselves. Gutiérrez adds that it is something that is given, which is real and concrete. "It now assumes human reality, transforms it and finds its fullness in Christ."<sup>22</sup>

When sin is described in Liberation Theology, "it is seen as a separation from God but at the same time it is a historical reality."<sup>23</sup> Dr. Arias, in analyzing Gutiérrez, says that both sin and salvation are "intrahistorical

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. P. 196.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. P. 196.

<sup>21</sup> Gutiérrez. P. 197.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. P. 197.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. P. 198.

realities;" they occur in history. For example, sin is considered as a historical, social event, observed in the absence of fraternity and love in relationships among men, the rupture of the friendship with God and with men, and therefore an interior personal rupture. "Sin appears, therefore, as the fundamental alienation, the root of injustice and of exploitation."<sup>24</sup>

Salvation, then, arises clearly in the problematic condition of the poor which is the result of that sin. When taking that position, Compton specifies, it is not that poverty is being idealized; rather, it is giving testimony of the evil that has resulted from sin, from the break in communion with God.

When that position is taken "the person helps the poor, who are exploited, in the conscientization of their situation and helps them seek liberation from it."<sup>25</sup> He announces that it is through that unity that salvation is attained for those who suffer.

For Gutiérrez, the act of creation is a historical act:

God not only created at the beginning, but he did so with a purpose. God creates men so that they may be children. Moreover, creation appears as the first act of salvation:

The creation is a historical act of Jehovah, a work within time. It is what actually opens the book of history. True, since it is the first work

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<sup>24</sup> Arias. P. 145.

<sup>25</sup> Roberto Compton. P. 72.

of Jehovah, it is found at the absolute beginning of history; but it is not alone, it is followed by others.

The creation of the world initiates history, the human enterprise and Jehovah's salvation. Faith in creation removes its mythical and mysterious nature. It is the work of a God who saves and acts in history, and since man is the center of creation, it remains integrated in the history that is built with the effort of man.<sup>26</sup>

The Exodus will also be considered as a saving event of God that liberates Israel from the oppression of the Egyptians. Gutiérrez includes three arguments to situate the Exodus under that perspective.

- 1) The Exodus and the creation are a single saving act: "The actor creator is linked, almost completely identified, with the event that liberated Israel from slavery in Egypt. Creation and the liberation from Egypt are a single saving act".
- 2) Liberation theologians think they find in this Old Testament event a paradigm of God's and man's interaction in the liberating process realized in history.
- 3) Juan Luis Segundo sees as obvious the reason for this preference for the Exodus in Liberation Theology:

The Old Testament and the Exodus, especially, show two central elements completely fused in one: the liberating God and the political process of liberation that takes Israel from Egypt to the Promised Land. In no other part of the Scripture does the liberating God reveal himself in a more narrow relationship with the political realm. It is known, besides, that starting with the Exile in Babylonia, the biblical literature that can be called sapiential becomes greatly, if not

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<sup>26</sup> Gutiérrez, P. 202.

entirely, individualist, internal and apolitical. Moreover, the New Testament would seem at first to reject or even discard, even when talking of liberation, all relationship to politics.<sup>27</sup>

### III. The Option for the Poor

When approaching this matter, the focus is upon the thought of one of its chief exponents.

Dr. Gustavo Gutiérrez Merino was born in Lima, Perú, in 1928. Gutiérrez enrolled in the San Marcos University in Lima to study medicine, specializing in psychiatry. At the same time, he began studies in philosophy and theology at the Catholic University in order to prepare himself for the priesthood. During his university studies, he was involved in the activities of socialist political groups among students. From 1951 to 1955, Gutiérrez studied psychology and philosophy at the University of Louvain in Belgium. At Louvain, he met Camilo Torres, the "revolutionary priest" from Colombia, who arrived in 1953. Gutiérrez and Torres established a close friendship while studying together in Louvain. Since 1960, Gutiérrez has lived in Lima, where he is professor of theology at the Catholic University.<sup>28</sup>

He is the best-known theologian and has the most influence in Liberation Theology. He has established himself as the dean of Liberation Theology, it is part of his nature.

The well-known European theologian, Eduardo Schillebeek, said about Gutiérrez that he is the first man in modern history, because he has brought up-to-date great

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<sup>27</sup> Emilio Núñez. Teología de la Liberación. P. 175-176.

<sup>28</sup> Ray Hundley. Liberation Theology. (England, Thesis Unpublished, 1982), p. 34.

Christian theological themes combined with a fundamental option for the poor, introducing not so much a new theology or chapter that will be added to the old theology, but a new way of doing theology, starting with the reverse of history.

Gutiérrez describes his tasks as follows:

We only try to live impregnated with the pure Christian message, and only within a particular context, in other words, in the context of the poor who are oppressed politically and economically. We want to read the Bible, and all the traditions of Christian experience, through the eyes of enslaved populations who have been oppressed throughout the centuries.<sup>29</sup>

His two books are the basic works of Liberation Theology and the of the history of the poor. To understand Liberation Theology it is necessary to understand the perspective of poor people. It is necessary to scrutinize this real and demanding perspective.

The first thing that Liberation Theologians did was to verify the extreme poverty that condemns millions of people in Latin America. Poverty there is considered "a social plague". Without this fundamental perspective, Gutiérrez says, "it is not easy to understand Liberation Theology; you cannot understand Liberation Theology abstractly as a system of ideas without any connection in history."<sup>30</sup>

Liberation Theology seeks to have a total commitment with the poor of Latin America, and is at the same time a

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<sup>29</sup> Gutiérrez. pp. 34-41.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 42.

break with the present situation of injustice and oppression.

The essential contents of Gutiérrez' 1968-1972 presentation of The Theology of Liberation can be divided into two basic parts: a theoretical section, dealing with the task of theology, and a practical section, dealing with the relation of the Church to the world. In the theoretical section, Gutiérrez explains that the proper task of theology is a critical reflection of liberating praxis. In the practical section, he shows that the Church should participate first of all in contextual acknowledgement.

"He believes the Latin American Christian has for years expressed lax indifference towards temporal works."<sup>31</sup>

Where a spiritual religious formation has been offered, there he has been permitted to see the present world from a perspective from which his eternal destiny will be decided.<sup>32</sup>

This is where Gutiérrez sees that there is a divorce from the real sense of what the Gospel demands.

He calls it Gospel reductionism. He affirms that under such a process, Christian categories and values were assumed or reinterpreted by the ideology of the existing social order, thus reinforcing the domination of one social class over another.<sup>33</sup>

Here Gutiérrez is absolutely right, especially when we historically analyze Latin America from the time of Spanish

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<sup>31</sup> Gibellini, La Nueva Frontera de la Teología en América Latina. p. 15.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. P. 15.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. P. 15.

colonization and the arrival of the Spaniards who brought the sword and a Christianity totally alien to what the Bible reveals. Some have pointed out this Catholic influence was a popular religiosity. Dr. Mortimer Arias says that Catholic influence has penetrated the Latin American soul and culture. The popular religiosity, aside from being a very common phenomenon, is today the object of study and discussion in Latin America.

This popular Catholicism is made of vows and promises, pilgrimages and multiple devotions, and the receiving of the Sacraments, especially Baptism and First Communion. Popular piety is centered in the cult to the Virgin Mary (recently reinforced by the visit of Pope John Paul II to Mexico and his pilgrimage to the Marian Sanctuary of Guadalupe) and the veneration of the saints. Sanctuaries are not only centers of miraculous cures and divine answers to all sorts of prayers, but also tourist and commercial attractions where images, candles, and symbols are sold. There is a simple and persistent faith in God in this popular religiosity, mixed with superstition and fatalism. But there are also important Christian virtues and moral values.<sup>34</sup>

However, some radicals consider this popular religiosity an alienation of the masses from reality and from the struggles for justice. Dr. Arias mentions Severino Croato who writes a severe critique of the situation. From his point of view, what is tragic is that this identification with the Christ who dies has a strong power of sublimation, injecting in the conscience its situation of poverty and exploitation as the "imitation of

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<sup>34</sup> Arias, Mortimer and Ester. El Clamor de mi Pueblo. (Mèxico: Casa Unida de Publicaciones, 1981). P. 3.

Christ." But it is an imitation of His death without a resurrection. There is no expression of resurrection in their economic and social lives. The Christian in order to identify himself with the dead and resurrected Christ, can only look at the future when he is able to resurrect. To resurrect beforehand he also has to look ahead to new situations.

That is why faith is subversive, it claims change, the step from death to life, in all its orders. Unfortunately, resurrection does not take place in the popular Latin American religiosity.<sup>35</sup>

However, Gutiérrez links this phenomenon that the Spaniards offered with the present reality. In the face of this alienation of the masses from present-day reality and of the struggles for the social justice that lasted for centuries, Gutiérrez comes to recognize that some decades ago, certain Christian sectors were opened to what was called the "social problem."

This gave way to the transferring to Latin America of the Social Christian current that played and still plays a role in the awakening of the social conscience of certain Christian groups.<sup>36</sup>

Now, we have to recognize that in spite of this the situation of misery in which many Latin American countries find themselves is palpable, it is very real. "Millions of

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35. Ibid., P. 4.

36 Gibellini. La Nueva Frontera de la Teología en América Latina. P. 15.

persons actually live in subhuman states."<sup>37</sup>

In the face of this reality, Gutiérrez develops an excellent thesis that explains how the phenomenon of poverty will radicalize political positions. This is basically explained by the fact that the church and its theology developed a premise of faith that was totally isolated from temporal concerns.

Emphasis was inter-ecclesiastic; the mundane, the historical, and the political were not seen as factors to be integrated in the process of expressing or living the faith.<sup>38</sup>

It seems here that Gutiérrez offers an excellent transition to the thought of welcoming the socialist revolution in Cuba. Even so he does not come to genuinely consider the reality of what we should call the struggle of empires, of powers, "when they impose themselves on Latin America upon the appearance of Marxism in Cuba."<sup>39</sup>

Gutiérrez accurately asserts in his socio-political articulation that the figures of Camilo Torres and Ché Guevara placed an irrevocable seal on the process that is being lived in Latin America, that decisively influences certain Christian sectors, and with this the "institutionalized violence," the indiscriminate use of force (prisons, jails, tortures, etc.) to maintain the popular movements' order.<sup>40</sup>

Continuing with his thought towards the commitment to the poor, Gutiérrez weaves a very intelligent analogy. The

<sup>37</sup> Arias. p. 4.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.,. P. 16.

<sup>39</sup> Núñez. p. 133.

<sup>40</sup>. Arias. P. 18.

continent's political radicalization gradually took an increasing number of Christians to a revolutionary posture. Faith started to arise at first as motivating and justifying a revolutionary commitment. Undressing it from all false ideological elements of a cruel social and conflictive reality, the Gospel was not only quarrelling with the revolution: it was demanding it. Thus a reflection on the Bible that was explicated and published with the name of theology of the revolution (including as a chapter, a tree that often hid the words, "the theology of violence") made its first appearance in 1966. Initially elaborated by non-Latin American theologians, it was taken out of context and found resonance in certain German theology, and was then translated in Latin America. From this perspective, commitment is more radical and questioning of the established social order, and the political analysis more penetrating than in the previous position. For others who share this perspective, the fact of the class struggle appears. The theology of the revolution accompanying that posture is situated in a line of support and justification of the revolutionary commitment of Christians. Its merits consist in initiating the destruction of the image of a faith linked to an unjust social order, but it has the risk of paying the high price of becoming a "revolutionary Christian doctrine."<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Gibellini. P. 18.

One of the key issues is whether the theology of liberation, in the face of a restoration of the poor, supports violence. Professor Ray Hundley notes correctly that Alvez has been able to argue that initial violence is the institutionalized violence of corrupt governments that oppress and repress people. Therefore, Alvez says, the reaction of liberationists and other revolutionists to this violence is "counterviolence," which is the power used to correct the faults committed by those violent and repressive governments. For Alvez, institutionalized violence of the government is censurable, but the counterviolence of insurrectionists is justifiable and necessary.

Hundley also points out that Hugh Assman has affirmed "that the fundamental intention of Christian love is to conquer violence but at times it is necessary to use violence to conquer violence." Assman continues that the documents from the meetings of CELAM II held in Medellín, Colombia, show that the Roman Catholic hierarchy in Latin America has accepted the concept of "institutionalized" violence as a true description of what is occurring today in Latin America.

Therefore, the only moral response to this observation is to support counterviolence to eliminate the initial violence committed against the poor and the weak.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Hundley, Ray. Radical Liberation Theology in Evangelical Response. P. 18.

This thought of revolutionary commitment to poor is giving rise to a series of questions that demand a serious theological confrontation, one that allows the visualization of the truth of these criteria especially in the light of the message and the ministry of Jesus. It is important to remember that I.S.A.L.'s movement has arrived at very concrete conclusions since 1967. They surely are committed to a movement where there will be no other exit but that of a liberating struggle. Dr. Núñez says

for groups like I.S.A.L., the option at that moment was to become auxiliaries of the revolutionary forces and to work especially in favor of developing a revolutionary conscience among the popular nuclei.<sup>43</sup>

Gutiérrez, like other liberation theologians, sees the struggle of classes as something that cannot be set aside; this struggle exists and depends upon a certain analysis of political and economic factors. Gutiérrez makes with his pen an interesting call to reflection to his Catholic Church and also for a modified theology to those who do not fully understand the implications of poverty.

Gutiérrez talks about poverty from the subhuman plane. His definition is precise:

to be poor means to die from hunger, to be illiterate, to be exploited, not to know what it is to be a person. In the face of this poverty, material, cultural, collective, and combative, the sense of poverty will have to be defined. He believes that the notion of spiritual poverty is even more imprecise. Frequently it is seen as an interior attitude of disinterestedness in the

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<sup>43</sup> Núñez, Emilio, Teología de Liberación. P. 65.

face of the goods of this world.<sup>44</sup>

Gutiérrez sees the situation of poverty and indicates what he thinks is its cause, namely, the injustice of oppressors. "There are poor people because there are men that are victims of other men."<sup>45</sup>

Professor Thomas Hanks in his book, Poverty and Liberation makes an excellent exegetical presentation of the poor from a biblical and theological perspective.

Professor Hanks says that:

oppression is the root of poverty. He describes the term oppression as the clamor of the people before God because of what the Egyptians did to them; that is, Israelites did not serve as poor slaves because they were an "underdeveloped" nation, but because Egyptians oppressed them by force.<sup>46</sup>

Professor Hanks makes further important observations that oppression plays a dominant role both in the Marxist economic analysis, and in the Latin American Liberation Theologies. But neither Marxists nor liberation theologians seem to have recognized the Biblical roots of their analysis that uses oppression as the basic cause of poverty.

Therefore, neither the traditional theologies nor the liberation theologians have taken into account how fundamental oppression is, nor adequately interpreted the figure of the suffering servant of Isaiah 53, that the New

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<sup>44</sup> Gutiérrez, Gustavo. Teología de Liberación. P. 367.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. P. 371.

<sup>46</sup> Hanks, Thomas. Opresión, Pobreza y Liberación. (San José, CELEP, 1981). p. 31.

Testament considers fulfilled in Jesus Christ.<sup>47</sup>

This dimension of the poor places Gutiérrez directly under a new vision of social occupations. It is not a matter of helping or sharing, but he seeks a total commitment to the political process. Gutiérrez says

that this option means one must take a different stance in the political world. It is choosing a revolutionary and socialist option, it is assuming a political task in a global perspective, more scientific than what it seemed in the first steps of the political commitment.<sup>48</sup>

Gutiérrez adds that this liberating praxis is more mature and questioning.

Hereafter this will be the framework of political involvement, understood where the Christian, committed to the poor and to the liberation of the exploited classes, will live and think its faith.<sup>49</sup>

He then says that only the separation of a society divided into classes, only a political power at the service of the great popular majorities, and only the elimination of the private approval of the richness created by human work can give a more just society. It is because of the above that the elaboration of the historical project of a new society increasingly takes Latin America down the road to socialism.

But this project of a different society also includes

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47 Ibid. P. 45.

48. Gibellini, Rosino. La Nueva Frontera de la Teología en América Latina. P. 21.

49 Ibid. P. 22.

the creation of the new man free of all serfdom that hinders him from being the agent of his own destiny in history.

#### IV. The Ecclesiological Perspective

When considering the ecclesiological perspective of the Liberation Theology, we face the reality that for centuries has existed on the Latin American continent. From the time of the colonization basically by Spain, the Catholic Church managed to mount a religious platform that gradually and through the centuries became another power entity but in the defense of its own interests. Gustavo Gutiérrez, when talking about the subject of the church in process of liberation, says

that the church in Latin America has for the most part lived, and continues living, in a ghetto state, which arose at the time of the Counter reformation. The result is the Latin American Christian community has been marked by an attitude of defense of the faith.<sup>50</sup> This led the church to seek the support of the established power and of the economically powerful groups to face their eventual adversaries and make sure that there was, as he termed it, a quiet proclamation of the gospel.<sup>51</sup>

Also, it must be remembered that during this time, due to religious struggles, there were great injustices and a continuous silence on the part of the Church in the face of the contextual reality. From the side of history we can

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<sup>50</sup> Gustavo Gutiérrez. p. 134.

<sup>51</sup> Gutiérrez, Gustavo. Teología de la Liberación. P. 135.

listen to the clamor of many to a church that showed its indifference to the message of Jesus Christ.

However, during the last two decades there have been substantial changes within the Catholic Church. Since 1968 at CELAM the bishop's message has been eloquent and confirmed a series of events of the past. They said:

During these days we have met in the city of Medellín, moved by the Spirit of the Lord, to orient once more the tasks of the Church in its work of conversion and service. We have seen that our most urgent commitment, as members and institutions of the Catholic Church, to purify ourselves in the spirit of the Gospel. The separation between faith and life must end, because in Christ Jesus the only thing that counts is "faith expressing itself through love". This commitment forces us to live a real biblical poverty that is expressed in authentic manifestations, clear signs for our people. Only such poverty would reveal Christ as Saviour of men and would discover Christ as Lord of history.<sup>52</sup>

This document presents an excellent voice of recognition of the past, but at the same time it seeks a new redefinition of the Catholic Church in the face of a commitment to the historical movement throughout the Continent.

That new vision, however, was not enough to restrain the internal reaction of liberation theologians; they continued with their perspective and indicated various concepts that attempted to redefine the perspective of the church in its commitment with reality.

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<sup>52</sup> Hundley, Ray. Una Ontología-Historia de la Teología de Liberación. Seminario Bíblico de Colombia, 1984. P. 77.

The main intention of liberation theologians does not consist of seeking a definition of what the church is under a traditional development of concepts. But it is seeking reflection towards a meaning of the reason for the existence of the church in the light of the revolutionary and contextual reality, where extreme poverty and social injustice abound.<sup>53</sup>

On the other hand, other Liberation theologians have tried to offer a definition, and the most exact is that of Ham Reyes when he writes:

The church is, then, those people who pursue in society the liberation that God made possible through Jesus Christ. In other words, the church is the incarnation of Christ, this is identified and comes to be in solidarity with the world in which it lives. It is practically the voice or the conscience of society.<sup>54</sup>

Individual efforts, in small communities and even the entire church, are creating a greater political conscience and are acquiring a better knowledge of the present Latin American reality. The Christian community is starting to read the political signs of the times in Latin America. All this has demanded an effort of reflection that responds to the questions asked by this new approach.

It is affirmed that theology is developed effectively in groups committed to the people's theology. Therefore, traditional centers are not giving the fruits that the moment requires.

In the development of the conscience and of a political interpretation of the signs, liberation

<sup>53</sup> Núñez, Emilio. Teología de Liberación. P. 242

<sup>54</sup> Compton, Roberto. La Teología de la Liberación. Costa Rica. Casa Bautista de Pub. 1984., P. 79.

theologians are forming a new criterion for the church; they are creating a people who gradually commit themselves to the political liberation process. These diverse sectors of the people of God gradually commit themselves in varied forms to the liberation process, and perceive that liberation requires a rupture with the present situation, through a social revolution.<sup>55</sup>

This program is clear when it locates a new vision of church that seeks a social revolution as central point of its presence. Gutiérrez is conscious that the degree of involvement corresponds to the minorities in the Catholic Church.

Another liberationist, Paul Richard, describes his vision for the church. The congregation of a church ought to be a "refuge of the masses", where economic, political, and cultural contradictions are conquered. A multi-classed and conciliatory church only legitimizes the oppression of the system. Further, Richard says this is where the destiny of a popular church, where the exploited poor can significantly celebrate their hope of liberation, arises.

Liberation Theology points out the problem of a partitioned ecclesiology, a policy that adopts society's class contradictions.

This ecclesiology will express the Church as sign of unity in a society divided into antagonistic classes, when in reality they are a society of oppression and exploitation.<sup>56</sup>

Upon reaching an understanding as to what is being

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<sup>55</sup> Gutiérrez, Gustavo. Teología de Liberación. P. 137

<sup>56</sup> Richard, Paul. La Iglesia Latinoamericana Entre el Temor y la Esperanza. Del. Costa Rica. P. 32.

expressed, it is clear that Liberation Theology seeks a new church project that assumes its theological role in the new anti-status political project. Hugo Assman exclaims:

For many committed Christians the structural iniquity of the status quo is evident, and as a consequence there is a need for a contrasting historical project. For example, we see the amply collaborationist role of the official church with its parallel sectors (the dominating classes). This perspective determines Liberation Theology's option for a new historical project that stands in direct opposition to the existing one, that demands that the official church embrace it.<sup>57</sup>

The confrontation is clear. Paraphrasing Paul Richard's words, we would say that we see an alienated Latin American church (an image suggestive of the European one) juxtaposed with the image of a new creature seeking liberation.

It is said that the church is a universal sacrament of salvation, that all human beings are temples of God, that the difference between the sacred and the profane no longer exists, that the church is not a world, but "the same humanity attentive to the word," and that we find Christ in fellow beings, not outside them, since this is the primary sacrament of salvation. The purpose of the church is not "to assure the reward of heaven," but rather to opt for the cause of the poor, to denounce the injustice of oppressors, to announce the kingdom of God, to raise the political consciousness of the oppressed, and to directly participate in the liberating praxis with the purpose of establishing a "more just, free, and human" socialist society in mind. And yet, many do not see contradiction between the universal love of God and violent struggle against oppressors, whom it is necessary to

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<sup>57</sup> Assman, Hugo. Teología desde la praxis de la liberación (Salamanca, Spain 1973), p. 169.

love.<sup>58</sup>

The church that professes to be Christian, undoubtedly is confronted with those positions that remove the dust from tradition. The church is called to respond with certainty in the face of the demands of people. Jesus was a man of power in word and deed. The church can do no less. Human affliction can already be seen in the spiritual or the material areas. It demands that the church with an effective conscience provide the support and due reflection on these realities that surround Third World countries.

In liberationist ecclesiology, the mission of the church means more than just opting for the poor, denouncing the social injustice they suffer, and announcing the kingdom; all this must lead to a commitment on the part of the church to the liberating praxis. Said in another form, the church must enter into political strife in order to comply with its mission. They have been clear: "we are either in the struggle for the poor, against the order established, or we are part of the oppressors."<sup>59</sup>

The general evaluation offered by Dr. Núñez seems important since it clearly summarizes the ecclesiology and the role of the church.

Emphasis of the ecclesiology of liberation is definitely placed on what it means to be church in a

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<sup>58</sup> Núñez, Emilio. Teología de la Liberación. Editorial Caribe, Costa Rica. P. 153.

<sup>59</sup> Núñez, Emilio. *Ibid.* P. 246.

revolutionary context of extreme poverty and social injustice. The outstanding proposal is that the church make a radical revision of its nature and mission and that it convert itself to the cause of the poor.

### Summary

Liberation Theology, with its political agenda seeks the development of an encounter with what already exists in Latin America. In this case, according to its projection for transforming the Latin American society, there are various platforms. First, poverty in an alienated society should be liberated from its oppression produced by capitalism. In this case, Marxist theory is of vital importance in shifting the power of the means of production so it is transferred to the hands of the proletariat, in this case specifically to the poor. There will only be a transformation when the poor are liberated.

One social platform is that capitalism is the oppressor: that is, the Pharaoh. This is the guilty one, and there has to be liberation from this. For them, the enemy is evident and the struggle is declared.

Another platform is the religious one of a society with a Christian varnish. It has a faith, a God, a creed, a hierarchy, and a people called the church. These religious values with their book, the Bible, under a new perspective of anthropological analysis cannot be eliminated because they form part of the culture of that

continent and of those people.

In Christian tradition cultural values form part of the people and can be identified through anthropological study. It would be a lack of foresight to want to eliminate those cultural values that respond to tradition: on the contrary, they should be used and channelled, as a means of reaching the objectives of social transformation. The great danger of this strategy is the presence of those who, despite their use of Christian faith as a means of professing to be Christians, live by a completely opposed philosophy. However, when committed to a political project, there is no other alternative and he is forced to use these same existing cultural values, in this case, religious ones that express a faith consistent with the contextual particulars of Latin American Christianity.

According to theologian Teodoro Donner, the most important objection that can be made of Liberation Theology is that there is no reason whatsoever for calling it "Theology." If our message is reduced to the affirmation that we should identify ourselves with the liberation process and if we recognize that, for example, the Marxist revolutionary is complying with the will of God in the same manner or better than a Christian, why talk about theology? Why name the name of Christ? If the Bible as Croatto, especially, explains, is only a book written by persons that only partially locate an event, that is, it is not the revelation of God, and on the contrary God is

revealing himself even in the Koran, why use or refer to the Bible? Donner adds, does not Liberation Theology then become an ecclesiastical blessing for a practice that arose without the help of the church? Are we then not falling in the same error that Germany's official church fell into when Hitler assumed power; the error of manufacturing a theology that barely justifies and sanctifies a historical, socio-political movement that at first glance seemed good and positive to the church of the time?<sup>60</sup>

Even the clothing that Liberation Theology is seeking to wear appears as if it proceeds from the Bible, and in spite of its criticism that severely call into question the Commission of the Church, it is practically impossible to accept their postulates as Christian theology.

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<sup>60</sup> Theodoro G. Donner. Teología Contemporánea. P. 63.

## Chapter 5

### HISTORY OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH IN COSTA RICA

Upon approaching this chapter regarding the history of Costa Rica's Methodist Evangelical Church, I must confess that the available materials are scarce, limited almost to the Assembly's minutes from 1925 to 1986, and a magazine prepared in 1967. Therefore, it is not possible to find an elaborate history that offers the necessary information for a thorough elaboration of this subject.

However, this chapter intends to give an account of a series of events that allow us to observe in this history the weaknesses of the church and its achievements, with the specific object of seeking pragmatic action. This will delineate a process that establishes a foundation permitting Costa Rica's Methodist Evangelical Church to continue channeling its mission and its entire ministry to the life of the Costa Rican people.

The reflection and development of this chapter responds to a life process that a people, God's people, have experienced. My years of involvement in the life of the Church oblige me, in this exposition, to utilize examples and perspectives taken from actual experience, especially during the last 24 years that I have lived in the midst of the ministry of this Church, of which I am a part.

The contents are developed as follows: 1. Historical

Content of Costa Rica; 2. First Period: 1917-1960 as Mission; 3. Second Period: 1961-1952 as Provisional Conference; 4 Third Period: 1968-1972 Annual Conference; 5. An Ecumenical Perspective of the Church; 6. Fourth Period: 1973-1987 Autonomy of the Evangelical Methodist Church of Costa Rica.

## I. The Country's Historical Background

It is not historically known why this country was named "Costa Rica". Costa Rica is a small part of the Central American Isthmus, which runs geographically from the Theuantepec Isthmus (Mexico) to the Gulf of Uraba (Colombia). Its territory of 51,199 square kilometers has a population, as per census of 1982, of 2,500,000 inhabitants. It is found in the center of the Western Hemisphere.

Influences from the North and South have converged in its territory and have influenced the development of natural and human life. If in past times, because of the lack of means of communication and of relationships with the rest of the world, it lead an isolated life, today, due to developments in the means of communication and transportation, Costa Rica enjoys a privileged position within the Latin American countries.<sup>1</sup>

Costa Rica is one of the countries of the Central American block. It borders Nicaragua on the Northeast and Panama on the Southeast, the Pacific Ocean on the West and

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<sup>1</sup>. Carlos Monge. Historia de Costa Rica, (San José, Trejos Hermanos, 1978), p. 7.

the Atlantic on the East. Its form is evidenced by its numbers:

maximum width, 275 kilometers, minimum 119 kilometers; maximum longitude, 484 kilometers. The Atlantic Coast extends lengthwise for 212 kilometers and the Pacific for 1016 kilometers. Its Nicaraguan border is 300 kilometers long, and Panama's is 362 kilometers.<sup>2</sup>

Its surface is diminished; the landscape changes constantly due to the diversity of geographical characteristics.

The proximity of the Oceans, Atlantic and Pacific, with beaches of all colors and formations, make our country a real paradise, both for nationals and foreigners. A few kilometers from its shores are high cold zones with sub-alpine landscapes.<sup>3</sup>

CLIMATE: due to its geographical location Costa Rican as a rainy tropical climate, due to the proximity of its oceans and narrow width of its territory, it is marine. Its topography explains the variety of climates, some of them excellent. Leaving the shorelines, where the climate is tropical, a few kilometers away, temperature and vegetation change, as if passing from one country to another.

With respect to temperature, there are three very well defined areas: hot, from 0 to 600 meters in the Pacific, and 800 in the Caribbean, with an average temperature of 26o C. The climate is mild from 800 to 1600 meters, with an average temperature of 20o C.<sup>4</sup>

VEGETATION: Some of the scientists who have studied

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2. Ibid., p. 7.

3. Ibid., p. 9.

4. Ibid., p. 11.

the flora and fauna of Costa Rica since the last century, affirm that few countries in America have so rich a vegetation in so far as species are concerned. The variety in soils and climates is due to the fact that our country is located in a transition zone, between biogeographic regions.

**NATURAL REGIONS:** Costa Rica has five great natural regions out of which have risen at least five cultural and agricultural regions. They are:

a) The divergent Central Valley; b) the Dry Pacific; c) the South Pacific; d) the North Sub-Water-shed; and e) the Caribbean Water-shed.

**AGRICULTURAL REGIONS:** These natural regions have constituted for Costa Ricans excellent resources for economic, social and cultural development. "We have a coffee-growing area, a sugar cane-growing Area, a banana and cacao-growing area, a fattening cattle-raising area, and a milk cattle-growing area."<sup>5</sup>

Costa Rica has seven provinces: San José (the capital), Alajuela, Cartago, Guanacaste, Heredia, Puntarenas, and Limón.

**POLITICAL AND RACIAL BACKGROUND:** Costa Rica was the last province that the Spaniards explored, conquered, and colonized. The extreme brokenness of its land and the density of its forests discouraged conquerors and

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<sup>5</sup>. Ibid., p. 13.

colonizers for many years. Populous cities such as Panama, Santo Domingo, Caracas, Lima, Cartagena, etc. had existed for many years before a real city existed in Costa Rica. Actually, there are no ancient cities in this country. In the XVI century a few settlements arose, but all, except Cartago and Esparza, disappeared.

In Costa Rica, as in the rest of Ibero-American countries, the main reasons for the Conquest were to save the souls of Indians and to take possession of their gold. At times this was done by pacific means and at others it was done violently. We find an outstanding example of the pacific consequence of these objectives in the expedition of Captain Gil González in 1500, which resulted in the baptism of the Chorotega Cacique and 600 of his subjects and in an "abundant collection of gold" which included "six gold idols at least a span high" in which the cacique no longer believed.<sup>6</sup>

Not so pacific were the tactics of Costa Rica's first governor, Diego Gutiérrez, who in 1643 used methods similar to those used ten years before by Francisco Pizarro of Perú. Gutiérrez, making use of deceit, threats and force, tried to take gold away from Indians on the other side of the Atlantic, at the same that he practiced the Roman Catholic faith.

The conquest produced in the Indians an "implacable

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<sup>6</sup>. Wilton Nelson. Protestantismo en Costa Rica, (San José, Caribe, 1971), p. 4.

hatred" towards the Spaniards. It is interesting to note that on the other hand Indians were friendly with the pirates and cooperated with them in pillaging Spaniards. It is not hard to understand this due to all they suffered because of them.

Another unfortunate result of the conquest was there reduction of the Indian population. It is estimated that there were 27,000 Indians in Costa Rica in the year of the discovery (1502). When the system of "commissions" was introduced and Indians were distributed in 1569, their total came to 17,166. The Indian population continued decreasing.

According to the census of 1741, their numbers had decreased to 9,000. As per the census of 1951, there were only 2,692 left; this means that only .33% of the Costa Rican population is Indian. It is doubtful that any other Latin American country has such a low percentage.<sup>7</sup>

FORMATION OF COSTA RICANS: Poverty was general, causing isolation among families. This resulted in the stagnation of religious life. The XVII century saw the Costa Rican family grouping itself in humble and isolated socio-economic units that were self-supporting.

These phenomena forced Costa Ricans to struggle and to forge, in a sense, their own destiny; this factor is distinct with relation to other Latin American people where socio-economic polarization has been a very marked characteristic.

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7. Ibid., p. 6.

This process of tenacious struggle and experience constituted invaluable preparation for the democratic system instituted in 1821. Costa Rica is one of the few countries in the Latin American continent where the democratic way of government has been successful.

In the essential formation of the Costa Rican people we find features of caution, conservativeness and timidity.

The combination of these features has prejudiced the balanced and normal development of social political and of religious life, which make "Ticos" a people who react to organization.<sup>8</sup>

This factor comes to affect the life of both the Roman Catholic and the Evangelical Churches. "It can thus be affirmed that the "Tico" is not given to the spirit of sacrifice with regards to his relation with the Church."<sup>9</sup>

PRESENCE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH: Religion and the conquest of Ibero America were ultimately related. The conqueror and the friar, the spade and the cross united in the Spanish and Portuguese domination of America. The express purpose of many, if not of all, conquerors was the conversion of the pagan Indians of the New World. The King of Spain decreed that all expeditions be accompanied by two priests. There were no exceptions in this procedure among the explorers and conquerors who came to Costa Rica from 1542 on.

The Costa Rican people gradually adopted the Catholic

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<sup>8</sup>. Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>9</sup>. Ibid., p. 55.

faith, coming to constitute just as in the rest of the Latin American countries, a vast majority comprising over 85% of the total population, according to statistics. (Even if there is a great difference between what statistics say and the number of practicing Catholics).

The Catholic religion enjoys a specially favorable declaration in the country's political Constitution, article 51.

The Apostolic Roman Catholic Religion is the religion of the State, which contributes to its maintenance, without forbidding the free exercise in the Republic of other cults that do not oppose universal morality nor good customs.<sup>10</sup>

Privileged in such a way, the Catholic Church's hierarchy has gradually established itself as a solid power in the country, providing substantial direction for many of the internal and of the external decisions "that the government makes in its governmental exercise."<sup>11</sup>

PRESENCE OF THE EVANGELIC (PROTESTANT) CHURCH: For Spanish Catholicism there was nothing more dangerous than Protestant thought, so much so that when Protestants arrived in the country, fiery persecution was unleashed against them, insinuating that what Protestantism sought was the destruction of "true religion." However, the effects of the arrival of Protestants completely contradicted this alarmist propaganda.

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<sup>10</sup>. Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>11</sup> Wilton Nelson, Protestantismo en Costa Rica, (San José, Caribe, 1972), p. 4.

According to historical annals, the arrival of Protestantism in Costa Rica set off in a very special way all areas of development: the agriculture and coffee-growing industry, the banking system, the sciences, the development of industries (Banana Fruit Company), education and culture until it placed Costa Rica as a country where illiteracy is 0.3%. (This does not include the new generations that are participating in the educational development of the entire country. "At present, 40% of the national budget goes into education)."<sup>12</sup>

The thrust Protestantism gave, that evangelistic message which was a transforming power covering the entire reality of human life, the arrival of the Bible in 1891 and the diffusion of its study until 1920, set the stage for the sowing of the seed of the Gospel in the entire country. Later it strengthened itself with the arrival of the different denominations constituting another period until 1940.<sup>13</sup>

By 1930 there were three active missions in the country: "the Central American Mission, the Methodists, and the Latin American Mission (including the English speaking Caribbean Protestantism in the Atlantic)."<sup>14</sup>

It is worth emphasizing that the Pentecostal movement has made a great impact in recent years; possibly 65% percent of the Protestant population belongs to

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

## Pentecostals.

Some denominational movements grew, were consolidated and nationalized from 1942 to 1980. Therefore, during the 1900s the Protestant Church has been seen as a solid body that delivers the following figures: 81,500 baptized members, 178 missions, and 99 denominational groups with an approximate population of 244,524 persons.<sup>15</sup>

As historian Dr. Wilton Nelson expresses: "If today the Church, the Evangelical people, were to unite as one single people they could, under Costa Rica's democratic system, decide the election of a President for the country."<sup>16</sup>

## II. Historical Background and Presentation of the Evangelical Methodist Church in Costa Rica

It was at the beginning of the Twentieth Century that the pilgrimage of the Methodist Church in Costa Rica began, as a ministry of the Episcopal Methodist Church of the United States.

The Costa Rican Methodist Church was a result of a decision made by the Methodist Board of Foreign Missions on April 26, 1917, to open a missionary work in Central America. The countries chosen at this time were Costa Rica and Panama. These countries were organized under the name "Conference of the Episcopal Methodist Church's Central American Mission," each country forming a district.

The first meeting of the Annual Conference was held in Panama City from January 13 to 16, 1921,

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<sup>15</sup> INDEF. Directory of Churches, Organizations and Ministry of the Protestant Movement in Costa Rica. San José. 1983.

<sup>16</sup> Nelson., p. 56.

with Bishop Wilbur Thirkfield acting as president. The second one was held in Panama on January 19, 1922, with Bishop Thirkfield again as acting president. The third one was held in San José, in February 1923, and was directed by Bishop Oldham. In 1924 Rev. J.A. Miller was consecrated bishop and in 1925 he presided the Fifth Meeting of the Annual Conference during which the aisle and tower of the "El Redentor" Church were consecrated. The present building of that Church was inaugurated on September 29, 1940, with Rev. Carlos Luis Alpízar acting as pastor.<sup>17</sup>

Having both countries' churches as part of the same Conference continued until 1960. "The General Conference (I.E.M.) of 1960 authorized the formation of a Provisional Annual Conference of Costa Rica and in 1961, the first meeting separate from Panama was held."<sup>18</sup>

In October 1917, the ministry of the Methodist Church in Costa Rica was officially initiated. The work was started by the Eduardo Zapata brothers of Mexico, and Bishop Miller bought a property located strategically on Central Avenue. The building had housed the "Catalán Center" Club. It was remodeled to facilitate its use as a chapel, which was given the name of "Iglesia El Redentor" (The Church of the Redeemer). "Thus it was from the beginning that the first Methodist Church in San José enjoyed an excellent location and adequate facilities for its activities."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Historical Narration of the Methodist Church of Costa Rica, 50th Anniversary. 1917-1967, p. 10.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

While W. P. Thirkfield acted as Bishop (1920-1924), more missionaries arrived and new centers were opened. Two properties were bought in Alajuela, San Ramón, and Barrio México of San José. In 1920, Methodists already had a mission in liberal Alajuela. In 1924, a day school was organized. In 1928, they built a beautiful chapel. The work progressed slowly during the first years of its existence, but in due time, the church in Alajuela became one of the most vigorous in the denomination.<sup>20</sup>

The Development of New Local Churches: By 1934, a change began to manifest itself among Methodists as they gained an increasing interest in evangelization. Because of this new churches were established and work districts were formed: the Central Plateau and the Pacific Districts.

According to history, the development of national leaders was very slow; years elapsed before any nationals appeared to take care of the flock. "However, in this new awakening an aggressive ministry on the part of some lay people took place. Later on we will also consider the vigorous action taken by some pastors."<sup>21</sup>

Pacific Region: In 1944, interest in evangelism was awakened among lay people. One of them, Dionisio Mora, with no more support or means than his two hands and an unwavering faith that God had called him to accomplish this task, travelled throughout that region evangelizing with great enthusiasm and managing the organization of the first church. "The work extended itself in the region of Sierpe

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<sup>20</sup> Nelson, p. 33.

<sup>21</sup> Reseña Histórica, p. 13.

and Puerto Cortés. A 47-hectare farm was purchased in Río Sierpe with the hope of initiating a socio-agricultural work."<sup>22</sup>

Because Golfito is located in the Banana Fruit Company in the Pacific Zone, the evangelical work among the company's employees and workers was started. Rev. Roberto Eaker was the first Methodist pastor in Golfito. In 1947, the church's temple was inaugurated, set in a picturesque scene with a view of Golfito.

Under the superintendence of Rev. Marion F. Woods during the years 1951-1958, the work progressed and several other congregations were established. During his pastorate in Golfito, many youngsters were trained to work in the Sunday Schools organized in the banana plantations. In Palmar Sur, a church was also organized with the cooperation of the Banana Fruit Company. These two churches started an program of evangelization that extended to the banana plantations and to the small towns in that region. Numerous Sunday Schools and preaching points were established. These activities extended up to Villa Briceño, Pueblo Nuevo de Coto, Pueblo Civil de Golfito, Buenos Aires, Piedras Blancas, Maíz, Palmar Norte, Camibar, Kilometer 31 and Placero. For five years, Rev. Russell Sargent also worked in this area with great enthusiasm and talent.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

The work in Villa Neilly started in 1952. Today, it is an active church

that has extended its work to the banana plantations in the vicinity, Coto 47 and Río Claro. One lay person, Felix Barba, and pastor Alexis Guevara started the work in San Isidro de El General in 1962. It is now an organized church.<sup>23</sup>

Region of San Carlos: The beginning of the Methodist work in San Carlos was carried out under the direction and initiative of Rev. Hernán Pérez who, as pastor in Alajuela, used to visit this zone periodically through long journeys on horseback.

He sowed the seed of the Gospel, established many preaching points and founded the San Lorenzo church. After he was transferred to Panama City, Rev. Carlos L. Jiménez visited the zone. Under his direction, the first evangelical chapel of Ciudad Quesada was established; here the local church suffered persecution.<sup>24</sup>

This region continued its extension, producing new congregations.

Central Plateau: The city of Cartago was the first city, outside of San José, where there was an intent to establish a Methodist ministry. The minutes of the first Annual Conference show that in 1920 Cartago's mission had 19 members and a Sunday School with 47 attending on average. This mission disappeared and has not reappeared in the statistical reports of the church.

During the Annual Conference held in November 1933,

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

Rev. Hernán Pérez, graduated from the Latin American Biblical Institute, was named pastor of the church of Alajuela. This was the first designation of a national Methodist pastor. That same year Carlos L. Jiménez and Carlos Alpízar were named assistants in San José while they finished their studies in that same Institute.

The second Methodist church in Costa Rica was established in Alajuela in 1920. In 1924, a grade school was also founded there. The church building was built in 1928.

From 1920 to 1924 the properties of San Ramón and Barrio México were purchased. During that same time, the work was started in both locations. After years of fighting, and because of difficulties in obtaining stable workers for the field, the property in San Ramón was sold.<sup>25</sup>

The evangelic dynamics of growth were maintained until 1960 and was part of the decade of the 60s.

The social service dimension was not absent during this process of mission. Missionaries who were sent to Costa Rica took the initiative of creating social service institutions. The Methodist School was founded in 1921 and first met in the rooms of the "El Redentor" church under the direction of Rev. Louis Fiske and his wife Marion, with a total of 17 students and 8 teachers. As a result of many problems, the school was forced to close.

"It was re-opened in 1949 under the direction of Rev. Powell Royster, who gave it a great thrust and obtained

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

accreditation from the Ministry of Education to grant the high school degree."<sup>26</sup>

The presence of the Methodist School in the Costa Rican community in this capacity has given greater credibility to the presence of the church, especially in the capital, San José.

The School for the Preparation of Methodist Workers (EPOM): It is important to consider this point and to investigate it because it would become the central nucleus of the life of the church in its theological ministry. It would permit the preparation of leaders, and up to a certain point would be the guide of a suitable theology in his mission. Ever since he founded the Methodist ministries in Panama and Costa Rica, Bishop Miller dreamed of a preparation center for leaders for these churches. In the book he published in 1927, Adventures with Christ in Latin America, he wrote: "We will never be able to have totally national leaders until we consciously and deliberately begin preparing national ministers."<sup>27</sup> However, thirty years elapsed before this preparation could be systematically started.

This perception, which was accurate and insightful, continues to be a calling in the Methodist Church when it complies with an integral mission. In 1957,

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, p. 17.

in the Sunday School classrooms in Alajuela's "El Mesias" (The Messiah) church, the School for Preparation of Methodist Workers (EPOM) was started. Entrance requirements were at a level just high enough to awaken the challenge in the young people that were rising within the church. Some of these, having felt the call of the Lord, entered the School and inaugurated with their presence this Institution's work. At front of this growing effort of leadership training was Rev. James Snedeker and four professors, among them his wife. "The first class of seven graduates completed their studies in 1960."<sup>28</sup>

In 1968 as per the Minutes of the Annual Conference this school closed its doors (since 1966 it had not received any new students), circumventing all avenues of theological education for the life of the church.<sup>29</sup>

Rural Center-Experimental Farm: This center of experimentation was initiated in 1955 as a coffee-growing center. It was later made into an experimental center. Its purpose was to work on the problem of conservation of natural resources, as part of Christian stewardship.

This farm has served as an operational center for the development of camps for youngsters, adolescents and young adults, couples, etc. It also served also as extension center to provide assistance to farmers, teaching them new methods to develop food. This center has been taken care

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>29</sup> Minutes. Annual Conference of Costa Rica. Ninth Session. Report Methodist Theological Seminary.

of in its diverse stages by North American couples serving as missionaries.

It can be affirmed that in spite of limited resources, the Methodist church accompanied its ministry of preaching with complementary social services in different areas.

Membership in the church, according to minutes of 1960, statistical report, numbered 813 in 17 churches.

### III. Provisional Annual Conference (1961-1967)

We could call this the stage of consolidation of the birth of mission, something which entered into the event of the commemoration of its 50th anniversary. By that time there were 20 local churches duly organized, and some specific information indicates the advance obtained up to that point: 813 members and 19 missionaries. Insofar as economic affairs are concerned, the subvention for the 1964 Annual Conference registered the following: total sent to Costa Rica during the last 10 years: \$944,660.00

This amount did not include subvention for the Annual Conference, constructions, equipment, scholarships and maintenance of missionaries.

This is a clear reflection that the work of this conference in Costa Rica was sustained including part of its institutions by monies coming from the Division of the Board of Missions of New York, which represents 80% of its expenses, and

that the national church contributed 20%.<sup>30</sup>

An important element that should be mentioned is the structure the Church exhibited at that time. By 1960, the simple scheme persisted. However, the Studies Committee for 1967, even though it recognized the lack of prepared personnel, recommended a structure that would require trained personnel, money, dedication, and the vision to pursue it.

Also, the process of evaluation of the ministry carried out up until that date became public.

In a comparative study with the Church of the Caribbean it was said that, in the Methodist Church of the Annual Conference of Costa Rica, the work was accomplished by "professional" ministers ordained or by missionaries who received their salary from the Methodist Church in the United States. "There were 12 local workers, some in process of preparation and 17 missionaries with special positions and performing various functions at the same time."<sup>31</sup>

Regarding this subject it is worth emphasizing the power of decision the missionary had when he had take a position regarding affairs of the local church. In the evaluation that appeared in December of 1968 in the Annual Conference, the Studies Commission said:

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<sup>30</sup> Rene O. Bideaux, Methodists in Costa Rica, (Costa Rica, 1964), p. 4.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

Missionary paternalism manifested indirectly still remains. The position of the missionary in administrative jobs, his dominating influence in the most important decisions, his attitude in the face of the national leader, his separateness of social life, his economic inequality, his private sources of income, etc., have created barriers between missionaries and national leaders damaging their relationships.<sup>32</sup>

Another important element in this process of analysis is the lack of participation of the lay person in the making of decisions. It is possible that this produced in the church members little interest in the life of the local church, in all its internal and external affairs, specifically in their commitment. As is revealed by an educative report:

a) an attitude of indifference toward its own activities exists in the church.

\* Because it has no consistence of the mission to which it has been called.

\* Because it has not taken into consideration the needs of the community.

\* Because its methods are not up-dated.

b) This indifference is made manifest in the low level of participation of church members in the church's programs.

c) There is an exaggerate desire to preserve traditional ways of work and programs.

d) There is a lack of trained leaders and of

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<sup>32</sup> Annual Conference of Costa Rica. Ninth Session.  
November 27- December 1, 1968, p. 8.

promotion of new members.<sup>33</sup>

It is interesting that this same Studies Committee was formed by full and substitute members as follows: seven foreigners and one national who is not participating in the church today.<sup>34</sup> Another factor for consideration is that the church's bishop never lived in Costa Rica, he only visited the country once or twice a year. The special visit he paid was, justly, for the Annual Conference where decisions for changes in positions were made. Thus, the concept of a bishop was that, together with his cabinet, he was responsible for the appointment of all pastors and missionaries. This system, plus the model of itinerance applied, had produced a real vacuum in the local churches and in the life of many leaders. It was in that year that the national church lost several experienced pastors who emigrated to the United States, some others went to other denominations, and another withdrew from the church. Therefore, in spite of all its achievements, the evaluation was presented, bringing as a consequence observations of weaknesses that were conspicuous, specially the urgency of better preparing the national worker.

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>34</sup> Minutes No.4, Annual Conference. December 1968.

#### IV. Annual Conference of Costa Rica

Since its eighth session in January 1968, the church started to operate under the name of the Annual Conference. This new stage consisted of a short, but at the same time, significant term, since it was to become the forum for the autonomy of the national church.

Several pictures are presented and are important in this stage.

First the General Conference of the United Methodist Church, through its Central Conference, proceed to name a new bishop to the area, Rev. Federico J. Pagura, an Argentinean pastor who at the time was taking some theological courses in Claremont, California. Because of his duties as, he decided to relocate in Costa Rica. It was the first time that the church in Costa Rica had its maximum leader living in the country.

The second important aspect was that, in the bishop's report of the Tenth session of the Annual Conference of 1970, the following was clearly expressed:

I believe that as Methodist Churches we need to clarify and define our mission, our goals and the strategy that can lead us, with God's help, to complying with them. A ship without a clear course cannot get anywhere; it gets to be a toy of the circumstances. And I believe that our Methodist Church has not yet found its identity, and because of its, it has been reduced to be the reflection and the echo of other religious groups acting in our midst, whose convictions we respect, but, whose mentality and orientation are very far from the Wesleyan tradition of which we

say we are grateful heirs and depositaries.<sup>35</sup>

In this first reflection of 1970, the lack of identity as a Methodist body is evidenced once again, even if the work that was being developed was only missionary, and was sent by the Board of Missions (today the Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church).

The report submitted by the Studies Committee of the Ninth Session of the Conference in November 1968, had expressed its nonconformity with the ministry the church was developing. The Committee stated:

As result of this study, we present the following report, we do it with mixed feelings: we are hurt and worried because we feel the church has not complied with its mission; it has preached a mutilated and narrow gospel; it has not given a true testimony nor has it expressed with actions the love for our fellow man. This lack of feeling as a mission has reduced our enthusiasm to a minimum and has been an obstacle for the growth of the church.<sup>36</sup>

In this session of 1970, several points which I summarize hereinafter are enumerated as priorities:

1. Preparation for autonomy. This was the next stage structural speaking.
2. Renovation of the church: pastoral. lay people, and congregations.
3. Seeking of an integral program as body and as church.
4. Taking of social conscience.

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<sup>35</sup> Annual Conference of Costa Rica. Tenth Session, January 1970, p. 3.

<sup>36</sup> Annual Conference of Costa Rica. Ninth Session, 1968.

## 5. Ecumenical emphasis.<sup>37</sup>

Two of the above points sparked much interest in the coming years, up to December 1972.

First, there came the preparation of the Discipline and Constitution of what the Union of the Three Churches would be: "the United Methodist Church of Panama, the Methodist Church of Costa Rica, and the autonomous Church of the Caribbean and the Antilles of its District in Panama and Costa Rica."<sup>38</sup>

This process of union was merely reduced to the Methodist churches of Panama and Costa Rica when the Synod of the Caribbean retired in 1972. Later, on November 16, 1972, the process of declaration of national autonomy of both churches took place separately. Later on, this new phase of the historical process, this pivotal moment, was to be considered in greater detail, which would result in the Evangelical Methodist Church of Costa Rica.

## V. Ecumenical Perspective

The ecumenical vision is part of the life of the church. The discipline of the United Methodist Church, which also guided the structure of the church, (version 68), stipulated the following:

- a. Proclaim and work for the unity of the

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 4-5.

<sup>38</sup> Minutes No. 6., Tenth Annual Conference, January 1970. p. 6.

church.

b. Analyze the relationship to The United Methodist Church to the resolutions, pronouncements, and actions of the ecumenical councils and agencies and publicize the same, and channel materials coming from the ecumenical councils and agencies to the proper agencies of the Church and materials coming from the Church and its agencies to the proper agencies of the ecumenical councils.<sup>39</sup>

Bishop Zottele defined the ecumenical mission as one that is carried out in such a way that it expresses unity.

The imperative of the ecumenical mission is represented by the demands of Christ's mission which sought the reconciliation of all men with themselves. This meant that unity expected the good of the mission that had to be complied with.<sup>40</sup>

Actually, according to inheritance, it was not difficult to confront the issue: however, what was understood by ecumenism as least in the midst of the local church was quite simple, for example: ecumenism meant sustaining relations with other groups and developing unity as the Body of Christ. Thus, the term was conceptualized from a practical viewpoint.

It is interesting to note that the Methodist Church of Costa Rica, according to its authorities and to tradition, acquired at the continent's level ecumenical relations with para-ecclesiastical groups in a normal manner, without considering ideology. From this we can determine, through

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<sup>39</sup> United Methodist Church. The Book of the Discipline. (Nash. Methodist Pub. 1968), p. 441.

<sup>40</sup> Conference Annual Minutes. (San José, Oficina Central, 1968), Informe Obispo.

its records, that it had relations with:

- ULAJE - Evangelical Union of Latin America Youth, 1964.
- MEC - Christian Student Movement. The relationship became official in 1964, as per the minutes of the Provisional Annual Conference, page 207.
- ISAL - Church and Society. The Conference in its session of 1967 received a courtesy report (even if this Commission existed since 1964 and was presided by a pastor from Guatemala, member of the Methodist Church of Costa Rica.)
- UNELAM - This organization has as its goal to seek the unity of the Evangelical church in Latin America. Its first President was Dr. Emilio Castro, today the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches. This organization died, to give way later on to the movement by the name of CLAI-Latin American Council of Churches.
- CELADEC - Latin American Evangelical Commission on Christian Education. Participation started in 1968. In December 1968, according to the minutes of that Conference, this commission's representative in El Salvador introduced the proposal to adapt material at a national level for the Sunday Schools. This became official and remained 15 years in the local churches's programs of Christian Education. This material

has been deemed an instrument that awakens conscience and ideology. Finally the church, because of this material's negative results, and especially because of its political connotation, rejected it. Bishop Pagura, who was designated to preside the four-year term from 1969 to 1972 was this organization's President, and he maintained it even during its Episcopal period in Costa Rica.

- WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES - In 1975 the request to become an associate member of the World Council of Churches was officially submitted. This application was accepted in its General Assembly in Nairobi, Kenya, 1975.
- CLAI - Latin America Council of Churches. We participated in its formation in 1981. We became an official member when the Council became official in 1982.
- S.B.L. - Latin America Biblical Seminary. Since 1973, close relationships were established with this institution so that it would serve as a theological center to aid in the formation of our pastors (it is considered today one of the centers of Liberation Theology)<sup>41</sup>
- NAZARENE - In the face of the change the Biblical Seminary

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<sup>41</sup> Minutes General Assembly, (Alajuela, Costa Rica, 1981), Del Informe del Presidente.

- SEMINARY underwent in 1981, the General Assembly approved this seminary as the church's new theological center.<sup>42</sup>
- ANGELICAL - The church is a member of this Federation of ALLIANCE Churches at a national level.
- CIEMAL - Latin American Evangelical Methodist Council of Churches. The church became an official member of this organization, also in 1968.
- CMM - Methodist World Council. The church became a member of this entity in 1974.
- IMU - United Methodist Church and Board of Global Ministries, New York. These last three organizations actually represent our Methodist roots at a continental, world level and in fact, our affiliation to the mother church with headquarters in the United States.

It can be observed that in spite of the lack of knowledge in its base--in the local church--the church had been officially participating in an ecumenical involvement with all these organizations on a national and an international level.

The other ecumenical dimension which was encouraged was our presence in the community. The relationship with the Costa Rican people can be observed from the beginning of mission in Costa Rica. The contribution of the

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<sup>42</sup> Minutes General Assembly, (Alajuela, Costa Rica, 1981), Del Informe del Presidente.

Methodist church of Costa Rica to the various organizations at a national level has been a reality and it cannot be hidden. We can affirm that it has been a tradition that has carried forth lay people and pastors in their corresponding districts. This ecumenical presence is carried out normally in response to the responsibility of service as God's people.

Today, when analyzing this ecumenical picture, we discover that the church at least at the pastoral level was participating in this vision. Of what, then, did the emphasis of this period from 1970 to 1972 consist? It seems that what was pretended was the penetration, in a new stage of ecumenical development and under the guise of commitment, of a political option. This emphasis came as a response to an ideology that had been developing as theological ferment and which had its roots in the European Catholic Church. Some Latin American countries had just received this reforming influence, among them Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, and Brazil; that is, those countries nearer to Europe due to their population of recent European immigrants.

Gustavo Gutiérrez says this occurred

in an effort to liquidate the mentality of Christianity and to moderately open it to the values of the modern world, and to the ideals of the bourgeois liberty and democracy.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Samuel Escobar, Evangelical Faith and Liberation Theologies, (Texas, Casa Bautista pub., 1987), p. 33.

El Dr. Samuel Escobar, justly says

that it was not the seeking of an imitation of developed countries, but actually of a liberation from that imperial domain. In 1970, the diverse currents towards a liberating theology were already teeming.<sup>44</sup>

That same author, Escobar, describes the years from 1962-1969 as a time of taking conscience and of radicalization of the Protestant churches in Latin America. This effort was initiated in order to formulate "the social responsibility of the evangelical church in the face of social changes."<sup>45</sup>

Six years after the organization of the group, Latin American Church and Society (ISAL), that had prompted the awakening, it devoted itself to training people to carry out the revolution. What was being sought through all this was a new political option and an integration of the revolutionary process that today moves our people.<sup>46</sup>

It was impossible for a conservative church whose missionary pictures had been until then of the missionary tradition, including as it is accused its unprepared personnel, to subject itself to a lifetime of activity that would be completely opposed to its missionary trajectory.

This is true, especially, when the Costa Rican context is considered. This context actually does not know the oppression of military governments, the acts of coups

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 50

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

d'etat, the fortune of the "disappeared," etc. The country lived, especially at that time, peacefully. Also, it has traditionally been opposed to all forms of violent revolutions, especially when they are armed (in spite of its Civil War of 1948.)

It is evident that this ecumenical journey, as it was sought to be travelled, responded once more to an action from the outside towards the inside. It was not something that the church was advocating, particularly in view of the lack of formation of its national leaders. One might ask, what was the platform of that new vision? The answer, in fact, did not exist.

Even if through some of the writings some knowledge of this mind set was evidenced, as is shown by the presentation of the study regarding the life of the church, it must be recognized that those using this vocabulary or who sought to use it in their writings were not Costa Ricans, but were leaders from other countries, and that some were even North American missionaries.

"Unfortunately the church has not yet understood its mission, its task is with the world; it has erroneously become a "world" within a world: a "ghetto". It gives the impression of being a refuge where there are trained and sincere men who have come out of their real life to invest their efforts in something "artificial". That is, they were working for the church, but not in favor of the world. For many it was just an authentic "refuge" of men who had

failed, who only succeeded in the small ecclesiastical world because they had not been able to succeed in the world, because the church is a more generous and more raw society than the one that the world offers".<sup>47</sup>

#### VI. Fourth Period. 1968-1972, Annual Conference

This controversial atmosphere produced an attitude of nonconformity among Costa Rican leaders, pastors, and lay people.

This atmosphere would later come forth as one of the barriers that is most difficult to overcome, and which would finally become the greatest obstacle for the desire for and attempt to unity between the churches of Costa Rica and Panama.

In general, the church was following guidelines from the organization of the church in the United States, an organization which has been very solid here. After 51 years of existence as a mission of the Methodist Church of the United States and later as a Provisional Conference, "the church in Costa Rica was confirmed in January 1968 as the Annual Conference of Costa Rica."<sup>48</sup>

In the same year the General Conference of the United Methodist Church granted permission for the Annual Conference of Latin America who wished to do so, to fulfill the United Methodist Church's disciplinary requirements, to declare themselves as national autonomous churches, but

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<sup>47</sup> Annual Conference, Ninth session, 1968. p. 3.

<sup>48</sup> Annual Conference, Ninth Session, 1968, p. 4.

only after being considered in previous consultation with the assigned bishop.<sup>49</sup>

This step towards autonomy was taken almost immediately by Argentina, Chile, Peru, and Bolivia, and later on, by Uruguay. The churches in Mexico and Brazil had acquired their autonomy since 1930. The idea came up for Costa Rica and Panama to unite as one church including the one in the Caribbean. This proposal took shape and, after several consultations, was approved at first.

After two and a half years of basic preparation for the discipline and constitution of the new united church, the following question arose among some lay people and most pastors in Costa Rica: why a union of both churches, when actually their cultures and context were completely different? This thought gave rise to interviews between pastors and to a special process of seeking prayer. After two months came the unanimous conviction on the part of the entire group of Costa Rican pastors that autonomy as the Evangelical Methodist Church was the wisest option. This decision was supported by the two missionaries present at that time.

By a document duly signed the decision was communicated on November 16, 1972, to the Commission of Unity of both churches. Logically, this provoked strong contradictions, since the declaration of unity (Panama-

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<sup>49</sup> Luis F. Palomo, editor. Una Antología de la Iglesia Evangélica Metodista de Costa Rica. (San José, Oficina Central, 1988), Documento No. 1, 1968.

Costa Rica) was being prepared for January of 1973. The Bishop in charge of both conferences, together with the representatives from Panama and Costa Rica, "finally allowed the two countries to proceed with the declaration of autonomy, but separately."<sup>50</sup>

The Board of Missions (today Board of Global Ministries) was notified of this decision. "It must be understood that this was decided by the majority of the pastoral body of Costa Rica and later affirmed unanimously in the Annual Conference of 1973."<sup>51</sup>

This decision was strongly attacked by some officials of the World Division and internally by a minority group of nine persons, members of the church, who decided immediately to attack the new autonomous church and its leaders.

1. It is important to point out that this decision marks a principle of freedom in the life of the Methodist church of Costa Rica, because for many years it was foreigners, the bishop or the missionaries, who had hierarchically made the decisions they approved and applied in the Annual Conferences. It is here that the doors opened for Costa Ricans to initiate a serious and strong task and identity before a completely new reality of responsibility.
2. It marks a stop to that process of becoming conscious

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., document V.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., document VI, 1973.

of an ideological thought that today is better defined as Liberation Theology.

In January 1973, in the presence of bishop Charles Golden from Los Angeles, California, and from the united Methodist Church; bishop Sante Uberto Barbieri of CIEMAL and officials from the World Division; Dr. Lewinstone McCoy and Dr. René Bideaux, the Annual Conference of Costa Rica received a unanimous approval.<sup>52</sup>

Both bishops present proceeded to consecrate the new authorities; then began the process of the new autonomous church in Costa Rica. This new situation polarized the attitude of some brethren who, seeking destruction, provoked serious struggling problems in their criticism of the new church.

This group, called "Action and Reflection" continued with a task of creating anonymous documents, that is they did not sign them, but sent them to the local churches and even to those abroad.<sup>53</sup>

What merits our attention is that this group had a socialist political position. Some of them very courageously confessed so later. This event was not an isolated action, but it had the support of some of the Methodist leaders abroad. This was discovered thanks to a cable received from the Executive Secretary of the Board of Missions for our area, ordering their Treasurer in Costa Rica to insure a check for \$2,500 (dollars) for the group "Action and Reflection".

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., document VII, 1973.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., document VII, 1973.

This decision made the General Board of the new Evangelical Church of Costa Rica demand an investigation on the part of the World Division regarding the decision taken by the Executive Secretary in the question, which was a direct intervention in the life of an autonomous church.<sup>54</sup>

After several months of interviews and investigations directly in Costa Rica, the General Coordinator of the Board of Global Ministries (Rev. Paul McClery), froze this decision to send the funds, thus supporting the national church. Several truths can be extracted from this situation:

1. That this type of socialist movement and of a leftist leaning was using the church.
2. That it had foreign support and support from within the same Methodist church.
3. That no matter what price they had to pay, they wanted power within the church.
4. It provoked a struggle of wear and tear for several years, paralyzing the solid development of the autonomous church.
5. It proved that we were not theologically prepared to face such a difficult battle.
6. It permitted several persons, members of the church, begin to self-describe their true identity within their political option.
7. It permitted some of the leaders exercising authority

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., document XI, 1975.

to begin to discover a whole reality where intrigue, slander, persecution, denigration, etc. were within the same church.

8. It proved that if we were talking about an Evangelical Methodist Church of Costa Rica it was because of faith and the grace of God in Christ Jesus.

There were two central focus serving as centers of operation of this problem in the life of the church: the central Methodist church of "El Redentor", whose pastor suffered together with the rest of the leaders, was the home church of the hard line leadership of the rebel faction. The other focus was the Methodist School whose director was a missionary and who was provoking instability within the Institution. He ended up practically confessing he was a Marxist and had to be expelled as a missionary. "Addressing this situation took many months and produced a lot of pain."<sup>55</sup>

There was no doubt we had to grow up as leaders and as a young church. This period of persecution helped achieve this objective. Something which aided in building a strong foundation for the Costa Rican church through this process was that, during those first five years a solid faith in Jesus Christ and in His will was maintained and we did not faint in our responsibility as leaders in the midst of a growing church.

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., document XIII, 1975.

Together with this phenomenon of adverse political positions trying to destabilize the church's direction in its first years of life, there was yet a whole other reality: during the preparation for the assumed unity (Costa Rica and Panama), work had been done only in Constitution and Discipline but there was no proposal regarding actual work and programs, etc.

In a document sent to the church in August 1984, the president of the church wrote the following: "If we proceed to an analysis of the past, reckoning from 20 years back, the most recent past that can be recalled more directly, we will see that the life of the church in its trajectory has been one of suffering, with ups and downs. A church in mission, consolidated as Annual Conference until 1968, to be initiated in or to be subject to a visceral struggle of ideological thinking foreign to our idiosyncrasy. I asked myself when autonomy was begun: With what experience? With what work platform? With what administrative vision? With what vision for extension? With what postulates of Christian education?, etc., etc...there were no programs! "The qualification as an intensely suffering church did not cease...it continued...it still continues."<sup>56</sup>

So we now have a number of factors that assailed the possible continuity of the church at its birth:

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., document XVII, 1984.

1. The internal ideological struggle supported from abroad.
2. The non-existence of programs.
3. A team of leaders not prepared for such an enterprise.
4. A youth equipped also with the problem of confused ideology.
5. A lay people foreign to the problematic truth we were living.
6. Confusion in the identity of the Methodist church.
7. Local churches as abandoned member churches.
8. Local churches ready to be closed due to the lack of members, such as: Barrio Mexico, Palmar Norte, and Puerto Cortès, and others convulsed by the ideology of the times.
9. An economically dependent church.
10. A church not committed to Christ and thus foreign to its responsibility to self-support and to its integral work.
11. An economically poor church.
12. A church where zeal of evangelization was sleeping and had to be awakened.
13. The very life of its members was, in the midst of the Latin American context, being attacked in the religious, social, and economic realms.

### Summary

1. It must be recognized that there was a process of mission that led the Church to the mission field without clear definition of method or objective. This occupied fifty-six years of history. In spite of this, however, a ministry was developed that established the foundation of the Methodist Church in Costa Rica. I suggest that this ministry, although unfinished, has indeed sowed many seeds in the Costa Rican soil, that many have come to know the message of Jesus Christ through this Church.

2. It must be confessed that the Evangelical Methodist Church of Costa Rica, in its opposition to the unification of the churches in Costa Rica and Panama in 1972, opting for national autonomy, marks the following:

a) A determining action giving nationals the responsibility of guiding the direction of the church. This was not a response to a nationalist movement, but a normal, responsible development that must exist in the church members, whether clergy or laity.

b) That the assistance that might come from foreign sources must be to strengthen the church's mission, never to force the leader's submission or, much less, to submit the life of the church to foreign interests, which are foreign to the reality of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

This marks a halt in the process of raising consciousness about the ideology which has sought to

introduce, through the Church, an attitude of commitment, something that could very well have been done through other mediums. This is to say that the leaders of the "avant-garde" simply operated according to their own criterion, without truly seeing the reality of things and, specifically, of the Church both locally and within the national context.

3. It is also notable that during the last decades, from the 60's to the 80's, the Church had been imprisoned by a muddled way of thinking. This had permeated the national leadership. Part of this serious deficit is a result of the lack of theological equipping that would point to a clear path for mission. Even when they have looked to theological institutions of other denominations, there is the factor of not having had the Wesleyan theology as the guiding light to our methodology. We do not deny the fact that Wesley's name or the term "Methodist" has been used; what needs to be analyzed is this: when it was decided that mission work was to be done from the United States to Latin America, in this case in Costa Rica, did we or did we not receive Methodist doctrine, or did we only inherit an administrative bureaucratic system along with a rudimentary Gospel. This is precisely what can be deduced upon a historical analysis. Dr. O. Costas says the following:

We have established, then, that theological education is a dimension of the mission of the church. Certainly, it is not the whole of what the church has been sent to

accomplish, nor is it the only way to give testimony to the Kingdom of God. However, we must recognize that theological education is an essential of this witness. A deficit in theological education can be decisive in affecting the course of mission. This is why the church has come to see the need to complement its evangelical mission with an educational one, just as Jesus complemented his preaching with teaching and healing.

As for doctrine, the urgency of an educational, theological development of the church in all its ramifications has been overlooked. Thus, although in some circles this has not been the case, the situation has been referred to in terms of a loss of identity. I believe we must recognize our disregard for our Wesleyan identity, inheritance, and theology.

4. We must recognize that the local Church, through a process of maintenance of the rudiments of evangelism, has managed to keep an evangelical fervor among many of its brethren. But we must also confess that the amount of people lost as members of our Churches is enormous.

5. The educational task, the task of training and equipping to affront the Church's mission in all of its contextual implications demands that serious steps be taken to cover this deficit.

6. This need remains standing for the Evangelical Methodist Church of Costa Rica. Even in 1988 it has not yet been able to create its own educational center that can

be used by leaders who truly have a knowledge of Wesleyan biblical theology, and who can direct the local leadership and churches into a full identification with the mission of Jesus Christ in the context within which they operate, according to their identity and convictions.

7. We must recognize that, possibly because of ignorance as to how to work in harmony with those who think differently and who are unwilling to submit blindly, and although ecumenicalism or pluralism is preached, the Evangelical Methodist Church of Costa Rica has suffered persecution, alienation and censorship on the part of those who have proclaimed themselves people or leaders of the vanguard in both Latin America and the United States.

8. Also in the light of this chapter, we must recognize with much pain that because of ideological conflict, many of our leaders who, between 1975 and 1983 had achieved an excellent academic preparation and who today are outside the life of the national church.

9. Finally, to neglect mentioning or declaring that the ideological struggle that the Methodist Church of Costa Rica has suffered would be to lay aside one of its most oppressing trials during the decade of 1973-1983, and even until 1987. We would have to recognize that this significant source of stress has brought maturity and experience, but that it has also marked difficult and bitter moments that are practically irrevocable in this historical process of the Evangelical Methodist Church in

Costa Rica.

10. The last chapter of this dissertation will discuss the process of recuperation of the mission of the Evangelical Methodist Church in Costa Rica through the proposed opening of the Costa Rican Evangelical Methodist Seminary, to begin in the year 1989.

## Chapter 6

### PARALLELS AND CONTRASTS BETWEEN THE WESLEYAN MOVEMENT AND LIBERATION THEOLOGY

Upon examination of both movements it is evident that there are several theological and practical parallels as well as various clearly marked contrasts.

Attention is now turned to a comparative and contrasting analysis of the two movements.

#### I. Theological Responsibility

In the first place we must note that Liberation Theology seeks to define new theological responsibility. Its focus is contextual and situational. Liberation Theology starts where people starve to death, where they are denied opportunities for education, or where political oppression causes injustice for the poor. Even when Liberation Theologians refer to the Scriptures to support their theological assumptions, they do so based upon the premise that their theological responsibility makes them politically committed. This commitment leads to political alternatives. Now, in this case, their options are socialist, including all the implications for revolution that such a position entails.

This view stands in contrast to the Wesleyan movement which did begin with the social context, but with a personal experience with God. The Wesleyan approach affirms first faith, salvation in Christ, and the work of

the Holy Spirit, then it throws itself into the task of proclaiming Christ crucified. Its commitment is primarily to God. It is a letting go of self will to be able to say, "What is it, Lord, that You want me to do." It is clear that it is not the context that will determine the message, but it is the Bible that defines the message. From this case comes a message that must be transmitted to society. This is not a reductionist attitude toward the Gospel; rather, it clears the way for a total openness to the message the Bible contains.

Now, the Wesleyan movement does not ignore the social state in which man finds himself, that is, from the situation of physical distress. The Wesleyan movement begins with the root of the problem, i.e., the knowledge of sin, or in other words, human life alienated from God. It is going to work in favor of humanity based on the conviction that only in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ will man be able to find the solution to so many acts of injustice and exploitation by which our society operates.

Thus it does not seek a new and different basis for theological responsibility, but it activates the revelation of the biblical message, emphasizing the saving grace of God in Christ and the love of God for all humanity.

## II. Praxis

Liberation Theology is going to stand firmly on this word. Behind the praxis giant of Liberation Theology stands

its socio-political significance and its strong marxist tone. "There is a conscious Marxist use of the word, and critical use of the word in a Marxist sense."<sup>1</sup>

The central element of what they call praxis is the "encounter with the poor."<sup>2</sup> Gutiérrez states,

The eruption of the poor, in our lives leads us to an active solidarity with their interests and their struggles. Commitment translates into an effort to transform the social order which generates outcasts and victims of oppression.<sup>3</sup>

This precedes a revolutionary agenda, derived from the analysis provided by the Social Sciences. Political praxis is explained fundamentally in an analysis of the Latin American situation, "which is also defined in precise economic and social terms."<sup>4</sup>

This particular aspect, especially when using Marxist concepts, has no parallel with the Wesleyan movement. But it does enable us to see how the Wesleyan movement came to discover the other; in this case, not the materially poor, but the "corrupted being far from God," i.e., the wholly corrupt person. Although this is a theological classification useful for detecting the concept of sin that runs through Wesleyan theology, it helps us to see that it involved a radically different approach to human reality.

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1. Núñez. p. 130

2. Op. Cit. Escobar. p.90

3. Gutiérrez. Praxis de la Liberación Teológica Y Anuncio en el Concilio. No. 96. Madrid 1974.

4. Op. Cit., Escobar. P. 90.

Wesley believed in social transformation, but he believed essentially in the transformation of persons who had come to God. This in turn motivated a confrontation with the message of life offered in Christ.

In view of a new challenge, it has already been said: "One cannot speak of holiness unto the Lord and be separate from the reality of the brethren or of the world." As the theologian Escobar states,

We cannot affirm that we believe in God and remain indifferent to the truth that, as the Lausanne Covenant says: 'We affirm that God is as much Creator as Judge of all men. Therefore, we must share His concern for justice and reconciliation in all of human society, and for the liberation of all men from all kinds of oppression'....The message of salvation includes a message of judgement against all forms of alienation, oppression, and discrimination, and we must not fear the condemnation of evil and injustice wherever they may exist.<sup>5</sup>

Central to our faith is the message Wesley proclaimed, and which was part of the Protestant Reformation: the message of grace, faith, and the proclamation of a Christ who by an act of divine love, saves us, through His death on the cross. This message must remain in central in order to be a true follower of Jesus, not only as a model, but as He who gives life and who invites us to attain the height and fullness of the stature of Christ. This must be the central element in the preaching and in the practical message projected today.

The majestic work of the Holy Spirit calling us to a

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<sup>5</sup>. Op. Cit., Escobar. p. 172

holy life in Christ Jesus must also nourish the latent cry for a current, biblical theological responsibility for our society. It is possible to awaken the practical optimism inherent in this message because it is the task and promise of the Holy Spirit.

It is important to keep in mind the fact that the emphasis of the conversion to Christ as previous to Christian praxis comes from our Reformed and Wesleyan heritage that has greatly influenced the most vigorous Protestant currents in Latin America.<sup>6</sup>

If anything, the Methodist movement displayed its obedience to Jesus Christ. This effective praxis must be displayed today and it will be an excellent contribution if we can learn from the experience of the XVIII Century in England. Finally, we must affirm that the evangelical praxis is Christ centered and is defined by the Gospel. We must not let ourselves be intimidated by those who, beginning from the Marxist concept of praxis and materialistic, dialectical vision of reality and history, consider as "praxis" only that which is politically significant from their ideological perspective. The evangelical praxis is to know Jesus Christ, and that knowledge expresses itself in doing good. Worship and ethics go hand-in-hand in the Old Testament. "Evangelical praxis is the daily expression of faith in the home, in the heart of Christian community and in the greater environment

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<sup>6</sup>. Escobar. *ibid.*, p. 190

of the civil community."<sup>7</sup>

### III. Opting for the Poor

Regarding this aspect we note a similarity in both movements. It is necessary to meet the needs of the poor and the dispossessed. But we will also see the difference in perspective of the two movements. It is precisely here that we recognize Liberation Theology's greatest contribution of the past two decades: to bring the poor to the foreground of social and theological reality. As Gutiérrez explains: "Today the poor are the oppressed, the social outcasts, the proletariat that struggles for its most basic rights, the deprived and exploited social class, the country that fights for its freedom."<sup>8</sup>

Dr. Núñez says

that whether or not we want to in our evangelical hermeneutics, we cannot avoid either the context or the poor. Theology cannot be done in isolation.<sup>9</sup>

In his excellent biblical study of the poor, Tomas Hans points out in surprise the great neglect of theology in addressing the issue of the poor. The Gospel is announced to the poor. These words of Jesus are neither casual or superficial. When he uses them (Luke 4:18, 7:22, Matthew 11:5) in reference to his own ministry, we immediately perceive that its roots go deep in the Old

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7. Ibid, . p. 190

8. Gutiérrez. Teología de liberación. p. 354

9. Núñez, p. 257

Testament. "Eventually, however, it takes us to Jesus' own missionary style, to his life as a poor man."<sup>10</sup>

Through the eyes of Liberation Theology, what is of utmost concern to its exponents is the class struggle. Consequently, the Church's mission is to become aware of social injustice, to opt for the poor, and to make a firm and irrevocable commitment to the revolutionary process of liberation.

"They make use of the Exodus episode to support their affirmation of God's favor to the poor."<sup>11</sup>

Through careful and cautious study, we must recognize that in the Old, as in the New Testament, we are presented a God whose theme and action are a concern for and defense of the dispossessed. Jesus himself was a living example of this praxis. He was born poor and he lived in poverty among the poor, serving them. He went to the masses and gave priority to the poor; he suffered with them and announced to them, first, the good news of the Kingdom of God.<sup>12</sup>

Jesus' calling began there, but is extended to all. He was not an elitist, nor did he reduce the vision for life that he took to all humanity.

In the Wesleyan movement the issue of the poor was not absent: Once Wesley's heart began to burn he could declare: "the world is my parish." There he saw the masses, the opportunity and the call of God. The commitment he would make was neither social or political; it is a commitment

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10. Escobar. p. 170

11. Núñez. pp. 239-240

12. Ibid., p. 238

motivated by his experience of salvation.

The Wesleyan movement develops its commitment and theological vision from the perspective of love of God and of fellow man. This becomes the root of Wesleyan hermeneutics. Therefore it is not an option or a preference to give attention to the poor, but a step of obedience to the voice of God: Love your neighbor as yourself. It is not a step towards class struggle, but the recognition of the fact that God loves every human being. Wesleyans must recognize that, just as God has had mercy on them, He has mercy on others.

The great dynamic of love of God and of fellow man is what led the Wesleyan movement to develop a passion for mankind. Wesley presented an aggressive message, and it is important to stress that he made a universal call to repentance. In order to enjoy true spiritual renovation and to obtain a new vision of reality, it is necessary to repent from sin. Thus, the Wesleyan movement spread its message convinced of man's commitment to his fellow man.

As for social injustice John Wesley was, in his time, recognized as a reformer; he confronted social conditions like a prophet of God. He spoke out against slavery, against the vices that were damaging society; he visited prisoners and miners; he preached on the street corners. Wesley and the Wesleyan movement were aware of the fact that the message of Jesus Christ was a whole. The Gospel was preached to the poor not only because they were

depraved of material wealth and because they were oppressed, but because people suffer the oppression of sin within, as well.

#### IV. The Place of the Bible

This aspect is of great importance to our examination because of the significance of the Scriptures in both movements. It goes without saying that, after all that has been said about contextualization in evangelical circles worldwide during the last twenty-five years and after recent investigations in the field of biblical interpretation and after the challenge represented by Liberation Theology, we must move only forward in the hermeneutical task of evangelicals. "It is impossible to interpret the Scriptures while ignoring the context of our social and cultural reality."<sup>13</sup> "We must confess that Liberation Theology has developed entirely new objectives for the interpretive task of the Bible."<sup>14</sup> "The hermeneutics practiced by liberation theologians moves out of praxis."<sup>15</sup> The deepest Christian faith demands we walk two paths: reading the accounts (and from this reformulate the traditional message), and listening to the Word of God already transmitted (in order to be more receptive to the world). We as Christians have for a long time walked along

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13. Consulta. p. 2

14. Escobar. p. 137.

15. Ibid., p. 139

only one pathway, and we have been grossly unaware of God's historic manifestations evident in the Exodus and many other episodes.

For Liberation Theologians, the perception is not one of two pathways but of a clear precedence of one over the other. This is consistent with the perspective of the primacy of praxis over the reading of the Word and reflection.<sup>16</sup>

Croato comments:

the primary source of Latin American Liberation Theology today is none other than the fact of Latin American liberation. Once again, it is facts that 'undeceive' meaning.<sup>17</sup>

This process of authorization that Liberation Theology applies to the Bible is what marks the difference between itself and the position of the Reformed and Evangelical Church in general. At the conference held in Medellín, Colombia in August of 1988, there were agreed upon a number of points in response to Liberation Theology and its use and view of Scripture that are truly cause for concern:

A. Aside from the argument through centuries concerning the ramifications of the church canon and the authority that the Roman Catholic Church gives to tradition, placing it on the same level as, and occasionally above, the Scriptures, we find disturbing the critical approach of some liberation theologians in utilizing historical criticism in their reading of Scripture.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., pp. 139-141.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 140.

B. We are concerned about what some liberation theologians do to the Bible, since as evangelical Christians we profess that it is our guide to faith and conduct.

C. We long to always take seriously this written revelation, which has power in and of itself to change the soul and to transform the life of mankind. The Gospel for salvation, an integral salvation, of all who believe in Christ. We reject the idea that Christ, and not the Bible, is of utmost importance. We believe and proclaim that the Bible is the written revelation of God and Jesus the incarnation of God, yet we cannot be sure to attain the knowledge of the authentic Christ apart from the written revelation.

D. We are concerned, too, about what certain liberation theologians do with the Bible, the exegesis they use and the radical leftist ideology which they project onto the Scriptures. The fact that we are also guilty of having ideologically interpreted Scripture is not an excuse to exchange one ideology for another and then impose it as the final word. In our hermeneutical task, we do not want to resign ourselves and say that it is impossible to come chemically pure to the Scriptures. We long to trust in the capacity of the Scriptures to communicate its message to its readers, "In your light we will see the light." We want also to believe in the assistance of the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth. The hermeneutical task is not

an easy one, but we feel motivated to continue in it, making an effort in the grace of God, to extract the significance of that written word and to speak with biblical authority in response to the Latin American situation.

E. We are gravely concerned about the sense of class division that some liberation theologians read into the Gospel, and about the intent to promote class struggle, leaving wide open the door to the escalation of violence in our midst. We are realists; we do not close our eyes to the fact that social injustice and the constant, brutal violation of human rights may drive the people, in desperation, to revolution.<sup>18</sup> Professor Hundley comments:

We must admit that for Liberation Theology, in its radical position, the Bible is no longer the foundation of theology, nor the rule of Christian faith and conduct. For Liberation Theology, it is nothing more than a collection of religious thoughts and recollections in which the significant events that allowed ancient peoples to survive and be freed of oppression and suffering have been recorded with great mythical and legendary beauty.<sup>19</sup>

At the same time, he considers this Liberation Theology's greatest error, one which breeds all others.

This perspective of Liberation Theology is entirely opposed to that of the Wesleyan movement, which unequivocally accepts the Bible as the primary source of

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., pp. 144-147.

<sup>19</sup> Hundley. Radical Liberation Theology: An Evangelical Response. p. 131.

## Christian theology:

Christian theology, the science of the only true and perfect religion, is based on the documented account of the revelation of God Himself in Jesus Christ. Therefore the Bible is the only divine rule of faith and practice, and the only primary source of authority of Christian theology. The Holy Scriptures constitute the quarry from which glorious truths are wrought and used in the building of the edifice of Christian doctrine. This concept of the Bible as the foundation and center of Christian theology is one of the basic emphases of Protestantism.<sup>20</sup>

## V. The Role of Violence in the Process of Social Transformation

Liberation Theology, in its political project, has met with failure. Núñez states:

The failure of developmentalism is due, say the liberation theologians, to the capitalistic system of economic production and to the way in which our society is structured. As a result, what is needed is not development or evolution, but rather revolution, the radical change of social structures and the establishment of socialism in Latin America.<sup>21</sup>

Gustavo Gutiérrez expounds:

Attempts to bring about changes within the existing order have proven futile. This analysis of the situation is at the level of scientific rationality. Only a radical break from the status quo, that is, a profound transformation of the private property system, access to power of the exploited class, and social revolution that would break this dependence would allow for the change to a new society, a socialist society or at least allow that such a society might be possible.<sup>22</sup>

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20. Mickey, p. 34

21. Núñez, p. 30

22. Gutiérrez, p. 26-27

It is of course true that there is a variety of views among liberation theologians; however, radical liberationists do approve of the use of violence in what they term "counter-violence."<sup>23</sup> The slave frees himself and in that act frees his master.

If he rejects violence in establishing a new master/slave relationship, he must exert counter-violence, that is, power used against violence that is oriented towards bringing about liberation.<sup>24</sup>

This position, of course, awakens great curiosity in view of Latin America's current wake of violence. Dr. Miguez Bonino notes that "we move about in a continual field of violence."<sup>25</sup>

Therefore, whether we place violence alongside the oppressed or the oppressor, we must recognize that both actions are violent. He continues, saying that in such a situation there cannot be a neutral stance. If one does nothing, he is in fact supporting the institutionalized violence of the oppressors in power at the time.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, it is assumed that one acts on behalf of one or the other.

It is true that historically it can be argued that revolution, where one takes the life of his fellow man, is in many cases necessary. Dr. Miguez Bonino calls revolutionary violence the "midwife" of

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23. Raymond Hundley. Thesis. p. 240.

24. Ibid., pp. 238-241.

25 Ibid., p. 241.

26 Ibid., p. 242.

liberation, and declares he is in agreement with Marx and Lenin, in that violence is necessary because there is no other way to overthrow the capitalist system.<sup>27</sup>

The biblical argument can of course be used to justify the supporting action of this option in the face of violence.

This represents a tremendous contrast to the Wesleyan movement that, from within a context of depravation and oppression, did not resort to a violent course of action to proclaim the good news of salvation. The proclamation was saturated in the belief that its message was sufficient to bring about necessary social change.

It could be argued that this message, as it was presented from its prophetic stance and as it denounced all forms of social injustice, whether it came from the oppressed or the oppressor, did in fact become violence. We would have to admit that this would, truly, be translated as violent. We may state that if this is true of this message, it will be violent.

But this violence cannot be in accordance with the administration of Jesus Christ. In this Wesley was clear and gave testimony to the possibility of operating in the midst of violence, never seeking to destroy another; instead, he went about believing in the restoration of the individual and in social change. We have already

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27. Raymond Hundley, Teología de liberación: una respuesta evangélica. pp. 18-19

established that the church does not have a political alternative, otherwise it would lose its identity and reason for being "salt and light of the world" (Matt. 5:13-14).

The Wesleyan movement saw clearly the person of Jesus and His profound message. Let us remember that in Wesleyan theology, the message that must be heard and recognized is the emphatic conviction that God loves mankind. From this Wesley affirmed what the Bible declares: love the Lord your God and your neighbor! Jesus moved among the people revealing the message of love, peace and salvation. From the cross He could claim forgiveness for those who offended and crucified Him.

To reiterate in conclusion, the Wesleyan movement as well as the biblical witness of the early church do not show that the issue is to either do nothing or to be on the side of the other. Instead, there is evidence that the message of Jesus Christ has its own reason for being, and that it situates the followers of Jesus in the Church, where they are to assume defined positions from which the word comes with authority but full of the love and the hope that comes from a God who can, in fact, effect change and make all things new. Violence must be eradicated from Latin American people, but not by aggravating or feeding the patriotic selfishness of some who, by the manipulation power, seek to proclaim themselves the freedom fighters of the people whom they later massacre and force into

unwilling submission.

If there is any one thing of which we can be sure, it is that Latin American people are sick and tired of the shame, and injustice which comes from the outside as it does from within. Precisely because of violence and counter-violence has there been such bloodshed that has cut off the hope of many individuals and peoples. It is because of the abuse that has been suffered that poverty is so widespread, and it has become the call of the Church in Latin America to launch a crusade of salvation to raise the honor and dignity of its people.

We might declare that: in honor of our respect for human life; in honor of human rights; in honor of the love of God, Creator of human life; in honor of love for fellow man, today confronted with such violence and corruption (institutionalized and in the process of becoming so), we as a church, as the people of God, take possession again of Christ's intent: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit" (Zech. 4:6).

We reclaim the proclamation of conversion to Christ as the Christian praxis revealed in the Bible, that is the conversion to Christ which we can attest to throughout the Wesleyan experience.<sup>28</sup>

In response to such a challenge, we commit ourselves to this crusade, that by the love and power of God and through faith in Jesus Christ, we will eradicate from our

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<sup>28</sup>. Escobar. pp. 175-176.

people this destructive pestilence: violence, counter-violence, corruption, the taking up of arms, and all else that might lead man to sin (corporate or individual), and which therefore must not be allowed.

This is so in view of God's plan and His biblical revelation in Christ, lest missiological and theological reflection, and that which is spiritual and ethical be reduced to economic and social terms or even, to political ideology.<sup>29</sup>

Let us consider John Wesley's model. Love was the key dynamic in Wesley's whole life and theology. The Christian's life was to be one of active faith-faith working by love. For Wesley, the "pressure of the future" consisted in a combination of scatological hope and dread permeated by love. Justice and righteousness were the outworking of love. He said,

Righteousness is the fruit of God's reigning in the heart. And what is righteousness, but love? the love of God and of all mankind, flowing from faith in Jesus christ, and producing humbleness of mind, meekness, gentleness, longsuffering, patience, deadness to the world; and every right disposition of the heart, toward God and toward man. And by these it produces all holy actions, whatsoever are lovely or of good report; whatsoever works of faith and labor of love are acceptable to God, and profitable to man.<sup>30</sup>

#### VI. The Role of Commitment in Justice and Mercy

Liberation Theology has indeed made serious statements in response to the social injustice in Latin America, and has exposed the muted silence of the Church. Today, that

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 167-174.

<sup>30</sup> Howard A. Snyder, The Radical Wesley. p. 88

silence is signaled as proof of guilt, even when it can be justified from the standpoint that the evangelical message was channeled inappropriately in Latin America. We have already seen the confession made by the Catholic Church in Medellín. Dr. Núñez makes the statement that "the message received was dualistic, individualistic and excessively futuristic."<sup>31</sup> "That is to say, it was not founded in the daily reality of the people; it was a message completely alien to the cry of the people."<sup>32</sup>

These serious statements by advocates of Liberation Theology have prodded not only the Catholic but the Evangelical community as well, who have been roused from their lethargy. This has caused the Church to reexamine its history, and will continue to serve as motivation for doing so. Liberation Theology, says Dr. Escobar, has undertaken this reevaluation many times, often making radical changes in its political praxis its point of departure. "This process has resulted in making their revision of history the pretext for their historical labor."<sup>33</sup>

"Protestantism has been accused, in concrete terms, of experiencing an identity crisis and of participating in

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31. Medellín 88

32. Arias. p. 108.

33. Escobar. p. 111

activities of a neocolonialist nature."<sup>34</sup> Dr. Núñez states it is unfortunate that several ideological currents and now Liberation Theology have had to break into the Latin American scene in order for evangelicals to become aware of their responsibility to society.

With regards to this, although not in comparative terms, we can emphasize the Wesleyan movement's historical contribution and appreciate how, without preaching an historical praxis, it erupted in its people's history. The message of the Gospel was sufficiently assimilated as to consider it done. The revelation of God through the Bible and through the Holy Spirit was complete and intense; the spiritual and social responsibility it included was the one that English society demanded. We have seen how John Wesley preached and taught holiness that was inextricably linked to the reality of the believer and of he who lacks a knowledge of God.

We see also that the work of the Holy Spirit was profound, and that it led the Wesleyan movement to an unprecedented proclamation of the Word. As present people's lives were touched directly, as was the reality of the social problems of injustice that plagued the English nation. In spite of the fact that some overlook the Wesleyan work and ministry, the facts reveal a true identification with the spiritual reality of the people and

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34. Escobar. p. 112

a genuinely committed consciousness of the problems of injustice.

The Wesleyan movement appropriated the message of Jesus Christ and penetrated English society, offering the transformation that particular society needed. As Howard Snyder explains, "What is required today is the kind of action displayed by the movement under John Wesley's leadership." But Wesley also preached a Christ who is in and of Himself the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He preached a crucified Christ, but also a resurrected Christ, one who forgives and who gives life, a Christ who demands he be followed.

#### VII. Salvation and Evangelization

We have already seen, in the position of Liberation Theology, its criteria of salvation. Its universalist perspective is undoubtedly a threat to biblical, evangelical doctrine. "On the other hand, that doctrine permits liberation theologians to ignore the spiritual condition of man."<sup>35</sup>

The Medellín Consultation addressed this concern:

a. We see as cause for concern the anthropological concept of liberation theologians, a concept that at times seems to have an excessively anthropocentric emphasis that goes beyond the privileged position assigned to man by God in his written revelation. There is a Christian

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<sup>35</sup>. J.T. Seamands. Harvest of Humanity. USA: Victor Books, 1988. p. 60

anthropomorphism and an unbiblical one.

- b. We see as cause for concern that, without denying the fact of personal sin, some liberation theologians give structural sin undue consideration, neglecting the fact that, according to the teachings of Jesus, sin comes from within the human heart.
- c. We are concerned by the lack of emphasis to be placed in Liberation Theology on the individual's regeneration, on the call to repentance that is given to all human beings from all social classes.
- d. We are concerned that Liberation Theology denounces the sinfulness of the oppressor, but not of the oppressed, forgetting that, if we are not to exalt poverty, neither are we to exalt the poor, by virtue of the fact that we are all sinners.
- e. We are concerned that intra-historic salvation is stressed, but salvation that transcends earthly reality is not.

"This propagation of universalism tends in fact to eliminate the task of evangelism that must be accomplished by Church."<sup>36</sup>

The Wesleyan movement confirms the proclamation of Jesus as Lord and Savior. This Theological base of the Wesleyan movement is salvation by faith in Christ Jesus and His death on the cross. This proclamation of power, guided by the work of the Holy Spirit, permeated the masses, touching the hearts and lives of many throughout the

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<sup>36</sup>. Hundley. (Thesis unpublished), p. 4

English nation.<sup>37</sup>

Faith for Wesley was a condition of salvation, by which he meant that it was "necessary in order to receive forgiveness or salvation." He did not mean it was a "procuring or meritorious cause." Why did God make faith the only condition of justification? One answer, he said, is "to hide pride from man."

It was therefore an instance of wisdom worthy of God, to appoint such a condition of reconciliation for him and all his posterity as might effectually humble, might abase them to the dust. And such is faith. It is particularly fitted for this end: For he that come unto God by this faith, must fix his eyes singly on his own wickedness, on his guilt and helplessness, without having the least regard for any purposed good in himself, to any virtue or righteousness whatsoever. He must come to God as a mere sinner...pleading nothing of his own but sin and misery. Thus it is when his mouth is stopped, and he stands utterly guilty before God, that he can look unto Jesus, as the whole and sole propiation for his sins.

Christian faith is then, not only an assent to the whole Gospel of Christ, but also a full reliance on the blood of Christ; a trust in the merits of his life, death, and resurrection; a reliance upon him as our atonement, and our life, as given for us, and living in us; and, in consequence hereof, people are to cleave to him, as then "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption" or, in one word, then

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37. J.W. Bready. p. 242

salvation.<sup>38</sup>

This evangelical dynamic, whose proclamation was transformation, produced new strength to attack the evils of society.

The proclamation of the Christ who arose has been a glorious act of the Christian proclamation, of a Christ whose blood has the power to save and in whose name there is life and power for change.<sup>39</sup>

This spinal cord of our evangelical proclamation must be nourished and strengthened by the experience of a life holy and pleasing unto God. Dr. Snyder appropriately comments:

The Wesleyan synthesis balances present and future salvation. No one can accuse Wesley of underemphasizing eternal blessedness with God. In fact, Wesley's understanding of the Kingdom of God may be too otherworldly and too static. But Wesley's whole stress on sanctification, or Christian perfection, centered in the present reality of the life of God in the human soul and was a progressive, dynamic concept. He reasoned that if holiness could come at death, God could just as surely enable holy living now. "And by stressing 'all inward and outward holiness' on biblical grounds, Wesley kept Christian experience from retreating into an inner world divorced from the problems and sufferings of daily life. Holiness involved making a present stand for the righteousness of the Kingdom of God and especially bringing the gospel to the poor."<sup>40</sup>

At the conclusion of this chapter it is evident that the possibilities for analysis of similarities and differences between the two movements are enormous. It is

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38. F.N. Cox. pp.42-43,44

39. Escobar. p. 173

40. Howard Snyder. p. 152

worthwhile to recognize aspects that both exhort and make hopeful those who reflect on a theology that can truly penetrate and respond to the needs of the Latin American people, a theology that provides clear answers in the light of the Gospel.

1. The following must be recognized:

a. The calling to a theological task is valid for the evangelical church; it cannot labor or shape a theology while turning its back on God: "Whoever loves God must also love his brother." (I John 4:21)

b. There needs to be an awareness of reality as it is expressed in the Laussane Covenant. We all feel shaken for the poverty of millions of people and perturbed for the injustice that it causes. Those who live in an affluent situation must develop a simple lifestyle so as to be able to contribute generously to material needs as well as to evangelization.<sup>41</sup>

c. Poverty, the external debt, drug trafficking, and the corruption of sin of the people continues to wear down and make life difficult for both the poor and the wealthy. The children of God are called to fight for the salvation that is good for all.

d. The Bible has sufficient bases to provide a current re-adaptation of the evangelical message of salvation.

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<sup>41</sup>. Escobar. pp. 170-171.

e. There must not be a divorce between the spiritual and the social, the temporal and the eternal. The Lord's Prayer continues to be an excellent model of God's holistic concern for each person.

f. Sin not only moves along individual and societal lines, but it is also structured and at times planned to oppress and suffocate the human masses. Sin, then, is present at both levels: individual and corporate.

g. The salvation received by the grace of God through Jesus Christ demands pragmatic action where people are their brother's keeper.

h. Liberation Theology has developed a tremendous theological reflection, based of course on its own principles. This demands our attention, as it is stimulating to the people of God, and they must be exhorted to give themselves to the serious, necessary task of reflection and of providing directives to the Church.

i. A reevaluation of revival movements is important, as they provide valuable directives as to the mission of the Church.

j. Intensive theological formation and education of the church members becomes a priority. Here we are also called, not to ancient molds, but to rethink new alternatives that facilitate educational creativity, to realize that through creativity biblical, theological instruction and evangelical praxis must

reach people of lower economic means. Education must be accessible to the people, to the masses, if there is to be change in community.

k. The Church cannot remain silent in the face of human suffering or injustice. In view of this reality, we must realize as well that to act wisely, lovingly, with Christian respect requires adequate training.<sup>42</sup>

2. The Marks of Mission and Affirmation.

a. The Church: is called to continue in its biblical and theological task. This theology must be focused to truly attend to the needs of mankind (man and woman) within its cultural, socio-political and economic context.<sup>43</sup>

b. The Bible: the Bible must continue to be the single, supreme authority of the evangelical faith. The Scripture contains all that is necessary for establishing a right relationship with God and neighbor. God's word has been received and passed along through inspiration of the Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testaments.<sup>44</sup> "The Bible is sufficient for providing the basic elements necessary for the reflective, theological task of the Church and the

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42. Baez Camargo. p. 191.

43 Donner. Teología Contemporánea. p. 81.

44 Ibid., p. 82.

people."<sup>45</sup>

c. Theology: Our theological task is based on the revelation of God Himself, and that revelation is given in His Word. Our evangelical praxis is Christ-centered, and is defined through the Gospel. In the act of incarnation, Jesus Christ is the manifestation of God's love, who in his love offers forgiveness and total redemption for all of mankind.

3. Holy Living: Without attempting to develop the full implications of holy living, it is necessary to mention the importance of returning to this doctrine, found in the Scriptures. This doctrine allows us to actually reach the dimensions of the stature and the mind of Christ (Eph. 4:13, I Cor. 2:16). When Wesley said that true religion is inward and consists of a holy and pure intention and a perfect love, he did not stop there. Religion is also social. The pure love is for God and man. There is to be an outflow of the heart-love. Inward holiness is to "exert itself" in outward conduct. Christians are not only to be; they are to do. They are to be "peacemakers." By grace one can be "perfect" in love that prompts the acts. Although the performance will have its limitations, there will be a performance.

There are two aspects to outward holiness. One aspect has to do with the discipline and improvement of the

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 83.

person's own life in his Christian walk. There is bringing into subjection the physical and mental powers, and there is the growth in the Christian graces. The other aspect has to do with the social order, and the individual responsibility in developing a better society. In either aspect, with Wesley righteousness or holiness comes first, and then Christian development is a process "subsequent" to that attainment. With the Reformers the opposite was true: Christian development is a process "prior" to the attainment of righteousness. Before a better society can be created, according to Wesley, there must first be better men. "Christian society is conceived in terms of its individual members."<sup>46</sup>

Wesley wrote: the Gospel of Christ knows no other religion than the social, nor any other holiness than social holiness. This commandment has been given us by Christ, that whoever loves God must also love his brother. The Church must promote this doctrine and make it part of its Christology, "Be holy as, because I am holy." (1 Peter 1:16)

4. Ecclesiology: The Church does not fight for possessions; the Church does not fight for power. The Church cannot allow any form of manipulation. The Church must serve as an instrument of God, as the extension of the ministry of the Suffering Servant.

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46. F.N. Cox. p. 131

It is the extension of the kenosis of the Christ of glory who strips His royal robes to give Himself to the poverty of man, struggling in his sin and alienation from God. The Church in the world suffers because of depravation, injustice, cruelty. That is why the Church is not a part of any socio-political economic system, nor does it imitate any system that seeks to impose its own materialistic lusts. The Church suffers but, like Christ, remains on the Cross to proclaim forgiveness, peace, and reconciliation with God.

The Church suffers but it is hopeful because Christ has risen; it suffers but it rejoices in the assurance of the presence of the Holy Spirit who gives all authority and power to say to the world, to the human heart, that Jesus Christ is Lord, and is power of salvation unto all men.

The Church suffers slander, but the Church does not grow weary in accomplishing its mission in the world. Neither political or ideological agendas have provided the answer to humanity, nor can cultural barriers bring to submission the gospel of Jesus Christ. Therefore it was not in vain that Jesus said, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19).

### Summary

Finally, we must acknowledge that Liberation Theology responds not only to a new theological task, but it has raised itself up as a center of deep reflection. Its questions and proposals continue being subjects worthy of analysis by many. From the Latin American evangelical perspective, Liberation Theology must be studied and confronted, although in some respects it has been a source of confusion and in others has fashioned molds that do not align themselves with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For this reason alone, it must be a subject of reflection among the Christian community.

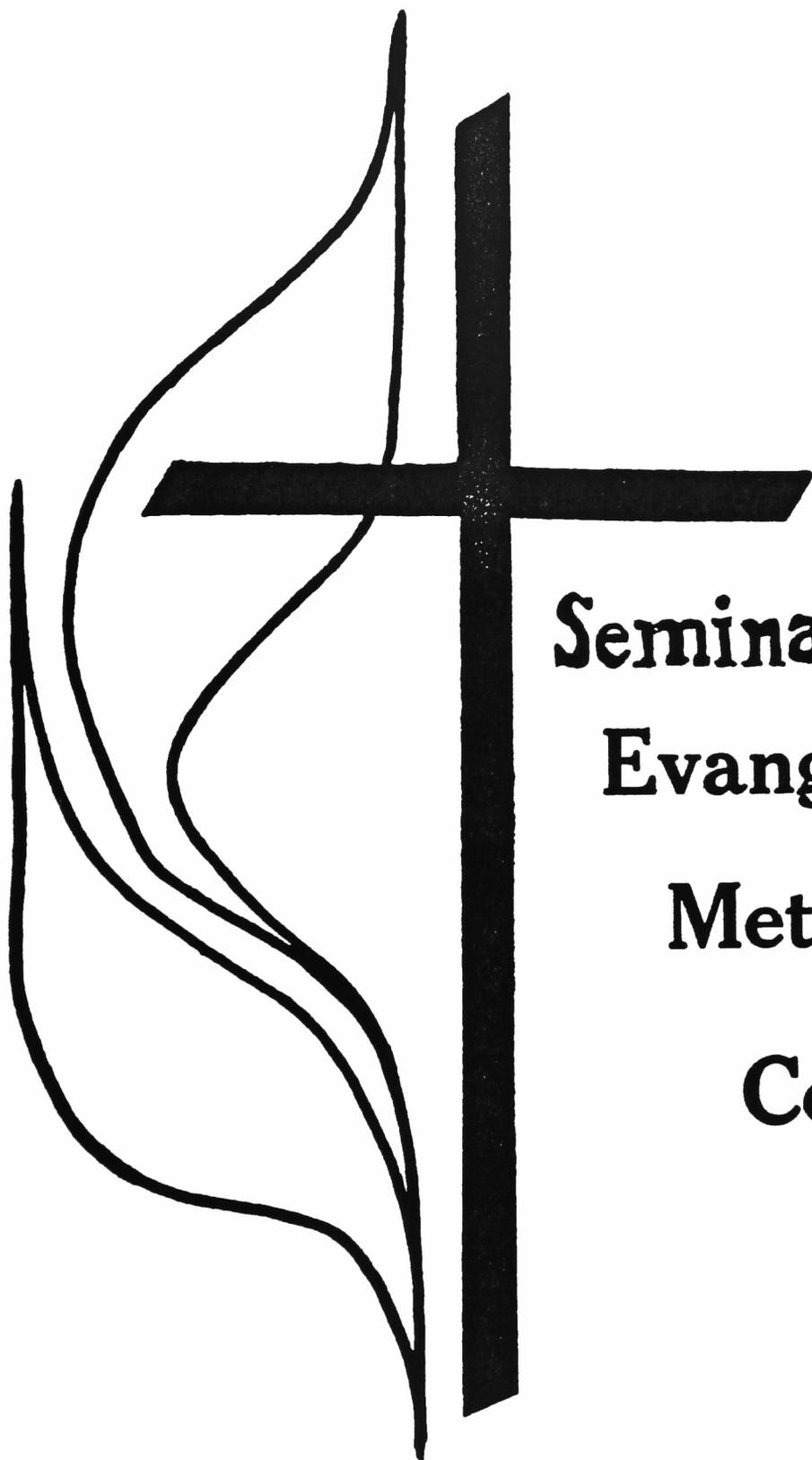
On the other hand, to attempt a courtship or a marriage between Liberation Theology and the theology of the Reformation, including Wesleyan theology, reveals a lack of knowledge of the objectives of each movement. We must firmly assert that Liberation Theology is a political project, seeking to use the Christian categories to support its theological position. Therefore, it is completely different not only from the Wesleyan movement but the evangelical one as well which, in its very foundation, holds fast to postulates that are completely opposed to those of Liberation Theology. This issue will continue to be significant in its role as point of departure in any kind of analysis attempting to treat Liberation Theology in relation to the evangelical movement.

Chapter 7

PROPOSED EVANGELICAL METHODIST  
SEMINARY OF COSTA RICA

This concluding chapter represents the discussion of the new Evangelical Seminary of Costa Rica.

**IGLESIA EVANGELICA METODISTA DE COSTA RICA**



**Seminario**

**Evangélico**

**Metodista de**

**Costa Rica**

**1989**

EVANGELICAL METHODIST CHURCH OF COSTA RICA  
MINISTERIAL COUNCIL  
COSTA RICAN EVANGELICAL METHODIST SEMINARY

PRESENTATION

As part of the Church of Jesus Christ, we, the Evangelical Methodist Church of Costa Rica are conscious that our mission - being about His work of proclamation and service - must be accompanied by and stimulated through a biblical, theological, and evangelical teaching. This teaching should facilitate the natural development of the members of the Church, who, obeying the call of Jesus, can penetrate their communities with knowledge and authority - thus solidly projecting their testimony of presence in proclamation and service. In light of this objective, the Evangelical Methodist Church of Costa Rica in its General Assembly of 1989 has authorized the opening of what will be called the:

COSTA RICAN EVANGELICAL METHODIST SEMINARY

This Seminary, as a theological educational entity, will develop its ministry of teaching and formation in accordance with the explanations in the following chapters. We are convinced that through the developmental and educational processes that will be followed, this Seminary

will become the institution that offers the theological -  
missiological stability and permanence the Church is  
demanding - building the necessary maturity in its  
leadership to usher in a new era of Wesleyan Methodism in  
Costa Rica. Further, we believe that, with the presence of  
the Holy Spirit, this institution will help advance the  
evangelical vision that the Church is projecting in the  
midst of the Costa Rican context.

We invite you to join with us in celebration and  
commitment as we share our vision for developing capable  
leaders in the Wesleyan-Arminian tradition!

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## HISTORICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Educational development, in the heart of its ministry, has been an integral part of the Methodist work. Today, all over the world, we find many Methodist educational institutions at all levels: Kindergarten, Grade School, High School, University, Seminary, and others.

Since the Wesleyan movement was born in the 18th century, the zeal to offer education to the people was part of the movement's projection into the communities it served. Dr. Báez Camargo, a Christian professor and writer from Mexico, has stated,

"The sanctity Wesley preached was not the "sancta simplicitas", nor the saintly ignorance of obscurantism. It was a brilliancy in the heart that also enlightened intelligence. Wesley wanted that his preachers were above all, pious, that they themselves had the personal experience of God's redeeming grace in Christ that they had to preach. But he also insisted that at the same time they be learned, studious, assiduous readers, and untiring disseminators of education".

In Costa Rica's Church this has not been a foreign factor in its history. This is evidenced by the fact that the Church has contributed to its community through study centers such as: the Methodist School in San Pedro, the Methodist Kindergarten in Hatillo, the School for the

Preparation of Methodist Workers, and other projects whose goal has been the forming the educational development of communities and the life of the Church.

The Church - because of diverse circumstances, and throughout its history in the country - has not been able to establish its own Educational Theological platform. However, it has not stopped seeking the alternatives to see this platform become a reality. Therefore, there exists a strong conviction that the Church has to have a solid and serious educational platform for developing the faith and ministry of its leaders if it is to grow and comply with the mandate of God in Christ to be the light and salt of the earth.

Bishop Amos Miller, when giving out the buildings of what is today called the "Methodist Center in Alajuela", supported and developed with vision for the teaching and preparation of leaders within the Costa Rican Church, said:

"We will never be able to have totally national leaders until we consciously and deliberately start preparing the national ministries".

In January of 1989, the General Assembly of the Evangelical Methodist Church of Costa Rica, seeking to obey the call of the Lord and moving under the conviction of its theological and formative ministry, gave official approval to proceed with the creation of the Costa Rican Evangelical Methodist Seminary.

The commitment of both the Church and the Seminary is

to an Institution that raises itself as a service operational center whose focus is to build up the body of Jesus Christ. And in the exercise of its ministry the Institution and its members will operate under a standard that sees its mission as one empowered by the Holy Spirit, honoring God the Father, and, at all times, glorifying the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ while expanding the Gospel to all of creation.

## LOCATION

Costa Rica is a country that belongs to the area of Central America. The bound are North is Nicaragua, to the East is the Atlantic Ocean, South is Panama and West is the Pacific Ocean.

It has been a country that for many years has been strong democracy. Today it is one of the most solid democracies in the world.

Costa Rica is the only country in Latin America that does not have an army; for that reason the biggest part of their national budget is dedicated to the education.

The population actually is 3 million of habitants. The size of the territory is 900 Km.2. During the last years the Central America Isthmus went through battle of wars, and Costa Rica was able to maintain the peace and has been able to contribute the same ways to other countries.

The Evangelical Methodist Seminary in Costa Rica will be situate in Alajuela, exactly 10 minutes from the International Airport Juan Santamaría. The city of Alajuela is the second province of Costa Rica with one population of 800 thousand of habitants. Alajuela has one of the best climates of the country. This city is found about 20 km. from the capital.

The existing facilities are of such quality that the Seminary will built itself. The buildings were builded, from the vision of bishop Amos Miller (U.M.C. 1957) who saw

the great need to prepare pastors and laymen for the ministry and the proclamation of Jesus Christ.

## Part One

## COSTA RICAN EVANGELICAL METHODIST SEMINARY

## AFFIRMATION OF DOCTRINE

## ARTICLE I: DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

We believe in God the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth and in Our Lord, Jesus Christ, His Only Son,; we believe in the Holy Spirit who proceeds and is one essence with the Father and the Son. These revelations, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, conform the only true God.

## ARTICLE II: THE BIBLE

We believe that the Bible, Old and New Testaments, reveal the Word of God. This Sacred Scripture is inspired by the Holy Spirit and we confess it the highest authority in all that is relative to the salvation of all human beings.

## ARTICLE III: THE HUMAN BEING

We believe that the human being has been created in the image of God. This image was distorted in all its parts by sin and the disobedience of our first parents Adam and Eve, thus breaking their union and friendship with God. God, through His prevenient grace, restores the moral nature to all human beings and enables them to respond to His love and to accept His saving grace through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ.

## ARTICLE IV: JESUS CHRIST

We believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God incarnated among men, and that He was born of the Virgin Mary. He died and shed His blood for the sins of all people. Christ was resurrected and is seated on the right hand of God the Father where He intercedes for us.

## ARTICLE V: THE HOLY SPIRIT

We believe that the Holy Spirit was sent by Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is God present and active in the world. On Pentecost Day, the Holy Spirit was given entirely to the Church. Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ lives and sustains His Church, the Gospel is proclaimed with conviction of life, and the Kingdom of God is revealed in the world.

## ARTICLE VI: NEW BIRTH

We believe that the grace of God is ample to justify and regenerate all persons who confess themselves and trust in Jesus Christ. These persons become sons or daughters of God and start living a life of sanctity through the person of Jesus Christ and the sanctification of the Holy Spirit.

## ARTICLE VII: LIFE OF SANCTITY

We believe that all believers have been called to a life of sanctity. This is an act that arises in total surrender. This step is subsequent to the new birth in Christ. Through sanctifying grace, the Holy Spirit liberates the believer from all rebellion against God. It permits communication with God be established again in love, facilitating the believer to love others. We believe that all believers have the certainty and the testimony of being children of God.

## ARTICLE VIII - THE CHURCH

We believe that the Church is the people of God, consisting of all who confess Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord. The Church is the body of Christ, visible in the world, living in obedience and giving testimony as it preaches the gospel of Jesus Christ. At the same time it calls humanity to salvation and to live in justice and in love for each other.

## ARTICLE IX - SECOND COMING

We believe in the second coming of Christ. We believe in the resurrection of all persons, in the final judgment, and in the eternal judgment, some to be saved, and others to be condemned.

## ARTICLE X - NEW KINGDOM

We believe in the final victory of God in Jesus Christ over Satan. Satan will be totally conquered and the Kingdom of God will be established. This will be a perfect state that will be given under a new heaven and a new earth.

## Part Two

## DECLARATION OF ITS MISSION AND PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

This institution, the Evangelical Methodist Seminary, exists in response to the ministry of teaching, for the man or woman who God is calling to minister inside and outside the Church.

We are committed to offer a formative preparation that actually leads the student in the continuity of his or her Christian life to reach the fullness and stature of Christ. (Ephesians 4:13).

The general historical perspective compels us to look at the multiplicity of aspects that shape today's world. For this reason, the Seminary provides the Christian Biblical vision, based on its Wesleyan-Arminian theological foundations, that affirm its evangelical beliefs. The Seminary, through its work and as a new community, is committed through its faculty and students to live in an evident way, practicing and experiencing the spiritual and social sanctity revealed by the Bible and clearly defined within Wesleyan theology.

The educational formation is strictly accompanied by a spiritual and practical formation. These two elements are continually linked under the conviction that our responsibility is to produce real leaders, men and women followers of Christ, who are equipped to be effective in their exercise of Christian ministry.

All teaching imparted has to have the clear purpose that it is rendered under the authority of the Sacred Scriptures and the full inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Our educational ministry is to continue Jesus Christ's task - of reaching this world and all human beings, so they may be saved. The Great Commission - teaching preaching, and baptizing - accompanies our theological task in the middle of the world in which we serve.

Our educational philosophy is born out of Biblical revelation, which gives us the foundations of the Christian faith in the person of Jesus Christ - who is one with the Father. We confirm that the revelation in the Sacred Scriptures comes to us through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

The theological roots guiding the Evangelical Methodist Seminary are found in Scripture and in the Wesleyan-Armenian theological tradition. This affirmation is developed in the declaration of faith that the Seminary professes (see Part One). All teaching members should be completely committed to these statements and with the Institution's reasons for existence so all teaching and ministry may be in accordance with the educational philosophy of the Seminary.

The commitment to these principles obliges all teaching members to offer a true Christian example that assists the students in the development of all their formative spheres: emotional, physical, and spiritual

growth. A prime objective will be to create and stimulate training and other events designed to produce the development of Christ's mind in the brothers and sisters who come to prepare to serve Jesus Christ as Lord.

The Evangelical Methodist Seminary, as an Institution of the Evangelical Methodist Church of Costa Rica, has as a key goal the development of the Evangelical Methodist Church - in all possible areas. At the same time, as an Institution seeking to serve and advance the Kingdom of God, it will seek to cooperate with the other parts of the body of Jesus Christ.

## Part Three

## CURRICULUM LEVELS

The Costa Rican Evangelical Methodist Seminary will be offering three study levels: Certificate (one year), Diploma (two years), and Bachelor's (three years). Additionally, the Seminary will be offering theological education by extension - a necessity within the Costa Rican context.

Further, necessary contacts with other similar institutions are being made so that the credits obtained may be recognized in process towards a Licentiate\* Degree in Theology.

(\*Above a Bachelor's, but below a Master's Degree).

## I. BACHELOR'S OF THEOLOGY DEGREE

This level will be offered to persons who have completed high school and who, for some reason, do not wish to opt for a Licentiate Degree, equivalent to a fourth year.

Course of study: 3 years - 107 credits.

## II. DIPLOMA IN THEOLOGY

The diploma in theology is a course for persons who have not yet completed high school.

Course of study: 2 years - 74 credits.

### III. CERTIFICATE LEVEL IN THEOLOGY

It is for the person who has completed grade school, but who aspires to complete high school.

Course of study: 2 years - 37 credits.

### IV. DEPARTMENT OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION BY EXTENSION

The Costa Rican Evangelical Methodist Seminary will start with a Department of Theological Education by Extension. This program will be structured for lay people. This people can pursue theological degrees at a later time and receive due academic recognition for the extension courses. However, the primary purpose of this department is to offer theological teaching for the life of the local church - at all levels. Diplomas representative of each student's level of work will be granted.

Course of Study: Time is variable - 16 credits (see pages 10 - 13).

## Part Four

## DEPARTMENT OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION BY EXTENSION

General Purpose: To provide a solid dynamic of teaching that offers theological consistency and reflection. At the same time to offer an environment where there can be continuous and integral feedback for all lay people - both men and women - so that they may exercise faithfully their ministry as children of God in this world.

Specific Purposes:

1. To promote the stimulation and motivation of each believer so that they may follow in the steps of Jesus Christ as disciples.
2. To provide the discipline and integral preparation of the people to facilitate the development of their own gift or gifts.
3. To satisfy the Church that it is providing its people an experience designed to assure proper theological and spiritual formation - all guided by the Holy Spirit.
4. To develop and enable each believer so they may serve effectively in a local ministry - both in a testimony of proclamation of the Gospel and service to the community.

The entire program will be duly supervised by trained teachers and pastors to guarantee the desired results. Upon completion of the program, a diploma, reflecting the level of work accomplished, will be granted for each of the

levels mentioned on the previous page.

**Concrete Results:**

It is expected that each person involved in the Theological Education by Extension program will obtain:

1. A serious and deep knowledge of the Bible
2. An adequate knowledge of Christian doctrine.
3. An ability to express his or her faith and defend it.
4. A knowledge and understanding of the importance of Christian teachings.
5. The qualifications necessary to develop discipleship groups.
6. The training needed to be able to lead others through the biblical fundamental bases to a fuller life in the love of God and the salvation of Jesus Christ.
7. The preparation to serve in the name of Jesus Christ, in his or her church or in his or her community.

1. Basic Course: Training for development of a General  
Local Ministry.

## Credits

1.1	Introduction to the New Testament	2
1.2	Introduction to the Old Testament	2
1.3	Theology of Discipleship	
	Module I - The Ministry of Jesus	2
1.4	Theology of Christian Service - Module I	2
1.5	Spiritual Formation - Module I	2
1.6	Introduction to Theology	2
1.7	History of the Wesleyan Movement	2
1.8	Theology of the Holy Spirit	<u>2</u>

2. Missions and Evangelism: Training to evangelize and  
open new preaching fields

## Credits

2.1	Introduction to the New Testament	2
2.2	Introduction to the Old Testament	2
2.3	Theology of Discipleship	
	Module I - The Ministry of Jesus	2
2.4	Theology of Christian Service - Module I	2
2.5	Spiritual Formation - Module I	2
2.6	Introduction to Theology	2
2.7	History of the Wesleyan Movement	2
2.8	Theology of the Holy Spirit	2
2.9	Study - Hermeneutics - Book of Acts	2
2.10.	Principles of Preaching - Module I	2
2.11	Modern Sects	2
2.12	History of the Missions	2
2.13	Anthropology of Missions - Module I	<u>2</u>

Christian Education Curriculum (Teachers)

## Credits

1.	Introduction to the New Testament	2
2.	Introduction to the Old Testament	2
3.	Theology of Discipleship	
	Module I - Ministry of Jesus	2
4.	Theology of Christian Service - Module I	2
5.	Spiritual Formation - Module I	2
6.	Introduction to Theology	2
7.	History of the Wesleyan Movement	2
8.	Study - Hermeneutics - Book of Mark	2
9.	Introduction to Christian Education - Module I	2
10.	Pedagogy in Christian Education	2
11.	Christian Counseling	2
12.	Christian Ethics	2
		24

## Local Church Implications:

The Department of Theological Education by Extension will, in effect, serve the local church. This service will be rendered in each local church, provided the church promises to give the place and commit to the effort that this preparation program demands. It is anticipated that, where there are circuits, various churches will join together in this effort to training their lay people.

All students of this department will be considered students of the Costa Rican Evangelical Methodist Seminary.

**Specific Requirements:**

1. Be a member in Full Connection with the local church.
2. Have successfully completed Grade School.
3. If desiring the Ministerial Council to recognize all studies, have successfully completed High School.
4. Have the support of the Local Board.
5. Be over 16 years of age.
6. Fill out the appropriate Admission Form(s).
7. Have tuition expenses arranged through the local church in its relationship with the Seminary.

## Part Five

## DEPARTMENTS FOR BACHELOR'S THEOLOGY DEGREE LEVEL

This level will have the following Departments:

- 100 Practical: Orientation, Ministerial.
- 200 Biblical Studies: Introd. N.T. A.T., Study of the Method: Penta. Minor Prophets, Matthew, Mark.
- 300 Theology: Introd. Christian Theology, Wesleyan T, Contemporary T, Modern sect T, Holy Spirit T, Christian service I, II; Discipleship T.
- 400 History: Universal Church, Wesleyan Movement, Latin America Mov, Missions Mov, Ecumenical Mov.
- 500 Pastoral: Preaching I,II; Counselor I, II; Public Service, Administration.
- 600 Christian Education: Bases, Methods of Teaching.
- 700 Evangelism and Spiritual Formation: I,II, III; Seminaries of Evangelism I,II.
- 800 Other sciences: Anthropology, Philosophy, Psychology, Sociology.
- 900 Languages: Greek, Hebrew, English.
- 1000 Graduation: Comprehensive Test, Thesis.

To a candidate to be admitted in the Bachelor's degree level of Theology, he or she must fulfill the following requirements:

1. Fill out the admission form.
2. Be member of the Church

3. Be involve in the Church and his or her ministry.
4. Have the support of the Local Church.
5. Be approve by the Council of Ministry of the  
Evangelical Methodist Church of Costa Rica.
6. Obtained the a high School diploma or its  
equivalent.

Note: Any person who has completed his university degree will be able to obtain the recognition for the master in Theology.

## Part Six

## CURRICULUM FOR BACHELOR'S THEOLOGY DEGREE LEVEL

## Courses First Semester

July - November 1989

First Semester	Credits	
200 Department of Bible Studies		
202 Methodical Bible Study	3	
300 Department of Theology		
302 Principles of Christian Theology	3	
400 Department of History		
402 History of the Wesleyan Movement	3	
500 Pastoral Department		
502 Principles of Preaching. Module I	3	
700 Evangelism and Spiritual Formation Dept.		
702 Spiritual Formation and Discipleship. Mod.I	3	
+++++++	+++++++	+++++++
Intensive: Pastoral Counseling - January 1990		
500 Pastoral Department		
506 Pastoral Counseling (2 weeks)	2	

## Courses for First Semester 1990

March - June

200	Department of Biblical Studies	
208	Methodical Bible Study - Gospel of Mat.	3
300	Department of Theology	
304	Wesleyan Theology	3
500	Pastoral Department	
504	Preaching - Module II	3
510	Public Worship	3
512	Pastoral Administration	3

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Intensive: July 1990      Discipleship

700	Evangelism Department	
704	Theology of the Discipleship	2

## Second Semester 1990

August - November

200	Department of Biblical Studies	
206	Principles of the Old Testament	3
208	Principles of the New Testament	3
400	Department of History	
404	History of the Church	3
700	Department of Evangelism and Spiritual Form.	
704	Spiritual Formation -Module II.	3

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Intensive: Contemporary Theology - February 1991

300	Department of Theology	
306	Contemporary Theologies	3

## First Semester 1991

March - June

200	Department of Biblical Studies	
210	Methodical Bible Study - The Pentateuch	3
300	Theology Department	
308	False Sects	3
600	Department of Christian Education	
602	Christian Educ. and Discipleship	3
604	Methods	3
900	Languages	
902	Greek I	3

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Intensive: Anthropology. July 1991.

800	Department of other Science	
802	Anthropology of the Missions	
		3

Second Semester  
August - November 1991

200	Department of Biblical Studies	
	212 Minor Prophets O.T.	3
300	Department of Theology	
	310 Theology of the Holy Spirit	3
500	Pastoral Department	
	508 Methods - Counseling	3
800	Department - Other Sciences	
	804 Principles of Philosophy	3
++++++	++++++	++++++
1000	Graduation	
	1002 Test Preparation	
	1004 Thesis	

First Semester  
January - June 1992

300	Theology Department	
	312 Theology of the Christian Service	3
400	History Department	
	406 History of the Church in Latin America	3
700	Evangelism Department	
	708 Seminary of Evangelism II	3
1000	Graduation Department	
	1002 Comprehensive Test	5
	1004 Thesis	5

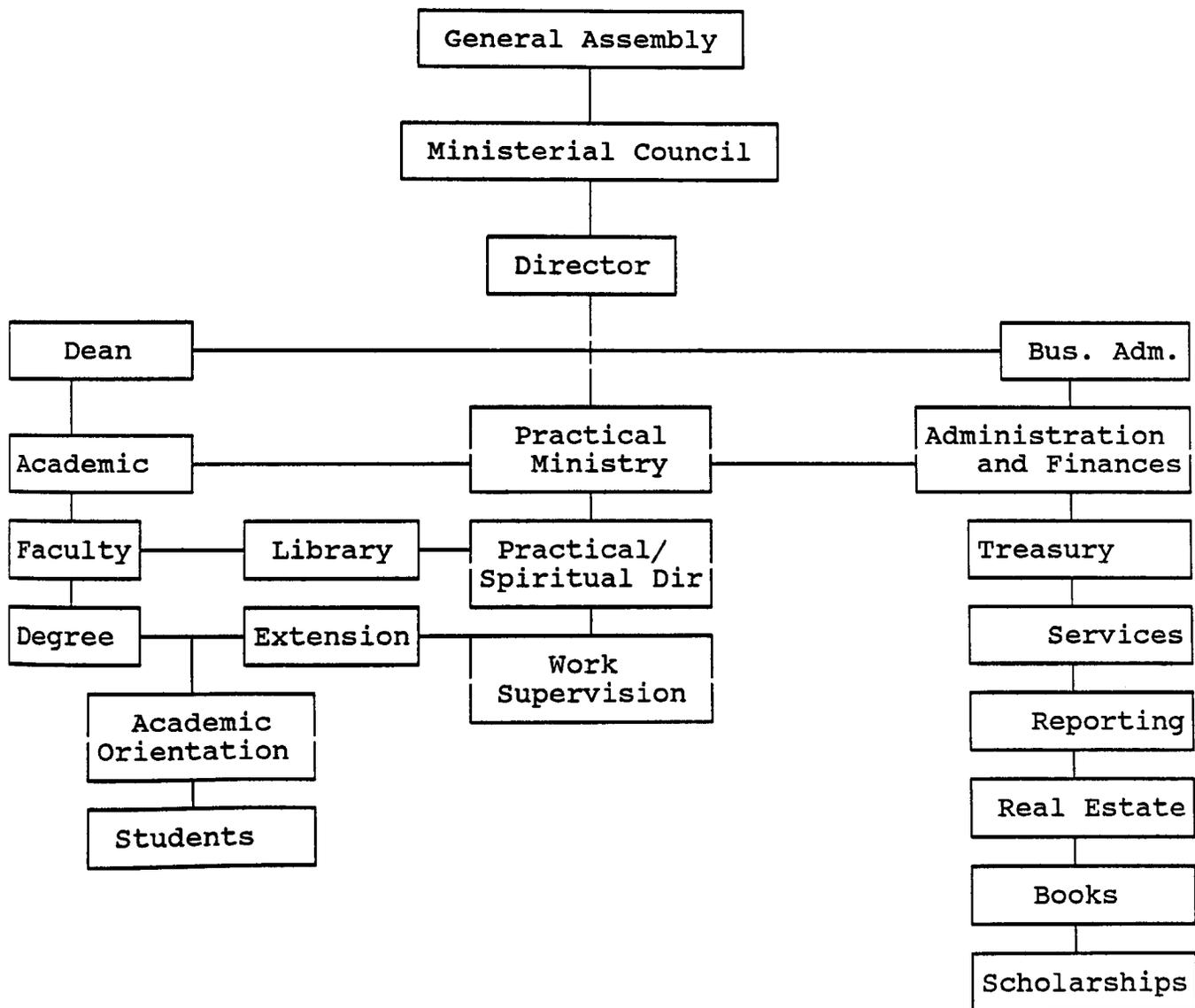
## Part Seven

## STRUCTURE - PROCESS

The Costa Rican Evangelical Methodist Seminary will operate during the first two years under the Church's Ministerial Council. This process will permit the some of the leaders of the Church to become aware of and participate in all the implications that the new seminary will demand.

The following organizational structure that has been approved by the Church:

COSTA RICAN EVANGELICAL METHODIST SEMINARY  
STRUCTURAL ORGANIZATION



## Part Eight

## DESCRIPTION OF THE STRUCTURE

## I. GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The General Assembly is the ruling body of the Evangelical Methodist Church of Costa Rica. It has the power to establish institutions or to discontinue any existing ones. The Seminary, as an institution of the Church, must report to the Assembly for the evaluation and supervision of its ministry.

## II. MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

First Article: The Ministerial Council will monitor the progress of the Institution. It will name the Seminary's Director, who will be confirmed by the Church's General Assembly. This Director should be an ordained Methodist, Costa Rican, a member of the Evangelical Methodist Church of Costa Rica and should meet the academic requisites for this position.

Second Article: The Ministerial Council as directive entity, will be apprised of the Seminary's total curriculum by the Seminary's Director, and will be the body that approves such curriculum.

Third Article: The Ministerial Council will receive, through the Director, proposals from professors to work full time for the Seminary. It will have the authority to reject or accept these proposals.

Fourth Article: The Ministerial Council will approve the Institution's annual budgets.

Fifth Article: The Ministerial Council, following disciplinary order, will recommend candidates for the ministry who should be integrated to the Seminary's program.

Sixth Article: The Ministerial Council will be apprised of and make decisions regarding students from other denominations who wish to participate in the Seminary's program.

Seventh Article: The Ministerial Council will receive from the Director, reports at least every six months and at any other time deemed necessary by the Council.

### III. DIRECTOR

The Director of the Seminary will:

1. Watch and preside over all matters relative to the Seminary.
2. Watch for faithful compliance by all faculty and staff with the Seminary's philosophy and education in its theoretical and practical dimension.
3. Submit to the Ministerial Council the formulation of the curriculum, and the Institution's budget.
4. Elaborate promotion plans and general statements with the equipment designated.
5. Supervise the Seminary departments: Academic, Practical Ministerial, and Administrative.
6. Name the persons in charge of those departments according to the needs of the Seminary and any other personnel at the administrative level in accordance with the budget.
7. Present applications for professors to the Ministerial Council for its consideration.
8. Represent the Institution.
9. Promote relationships with other seminaries at both national and international levels.
10. Promote relationships between the life of the Seminary and the Church at a national level.
11. Stimulate and motivate faculty and staff so that there may be consistent excellence in academic quality and spiritual formation.

12. Invite professors to contribute to the academic life of the Seminary through the offering of intensive or short-term courses.
13. Elaborate and submit to the Ministerial Council and the General Board all requested reports, at least every six months.
14. Prepare an Institutional report and submit it to the General Assembly when this Assembly meets.

#### IV. DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

Funds for leadership development, as well as any other funds designated for the Seminary will be maintained in the centralized Treasury at the Main Office of the Evangelical Methodist Church of Costa Rica. However, the Seminary will have an administrative system for monitoring, controlling and reporting the movements of funds designated for Seminary operations.

Business will be responsible for the following:

1. A checking account will be maintained in the name of the Costa Rican Evangelical Methodist Seminary. This account will have two signatures in common - that of the Director and that of the Seminary's administrative secretary.
2. This department will elaborate annual budgets and keep all finances in order.
3. This department will oversee the systematic purchase of books for the Seminary's library in accordance with the order it receives.
4. This department will direct the collection and disbursement of scholarship funds.
5. This department will manage the property's maintenance and other internal services.

## V. DEAN

The Dean will be named by the Rector of the Seminary. The requirements for the candidates for the Deanship will be:

1. To be a member of the Evangelical Methodist Church of Costa Rica.
2. To hold the academic degree that will equip him for that responsibility (Master of Theology).
3. To have the ability to work in a group setting.
4. To have teaching experience.

The Dean will be responsible for the following:

1. To coordinate all that is related to academics involving the faculty.
2. To watch over the development of the student's practical ministry.
3. To promote spiritual development in the student.
4. To supervise the Department of Extension.
5. To coordinate the acquisition of materials for the library.
6. To watch over the general needs of the students.
7. To provide the environment that might offer the student the academic assistance he or she needs.
8. To periodically submit a report to the Rector of the Dean's duties.
9. To assist the Rector in the implementation of Seminary programs.

**VI. FACULTY.**

1. In its educational process, the Seminary will be guided by duly certified professors.
2. Each professor's curriculum will be known by the Director, who will submit this curriculum to the Ministerial Council for approval.
3. In the event a professor comes as a missionary, his or her application will follow procedures for review and consideration as established by the Costa Rican Evangelical Methodist Seminary.
4. There will be resident professors as well as adjunct faculty. The Seminary, according to its educational needs will invite professors, either at a national or an international level, who will provide assistance for the development and/or teaching of the courses.

## VII. STUDENT LIFE.

1. By combining the student's knowledge and abilities, guide the student from the beginning of his or her Christian ministry towards the type of ministry for which the student is equipped, and involve the student in duly supervised practical work.
2. Eventually eliminate any frustration in ministry due to lack of call or vocation.
3. Allow the student to put into practice the theory within the contextual reality.
4. Through the Seminary and other experiences, create within the student the ability to deal with conflict and other ministry situations in a mature and capable manner.
5. Permit the student to discover his or her gifts, and to equip him or her to develop them.
6. The student shall, at the same time, identify him or herself with the Seminary's philosophy. He or she shall give evidence of the process of Christian growth and maturity and of the fruit of the Spirit in all he or she does.

## Part Nine

## ASSISTANCE AND PENETRATION PROGRAM

## Purpose:

According to the philosophy of the Costa Rican Evangelical Methodist Seminary, as the theological operative center of the Church, the Institution will seek to feed the life and mission of the Church. This will permit the Seminary to offer assistance in order to strengthen any internal ministry in the Church.

One of the immediate goals under this Assistance and Penetration Program is to create and produce basic materials that will strengthen the development of Christian Education in the local churches.

We believe that by uniting the various resources within the Church, we will be able to respond more effectively to the continuous integration process that should be exhibited in the national Church's program.

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