



CREATING NEO-CHRISTENDOM IN COLOMBIA

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ABSTRACT

The Catholic Church in Colombia, like those elsewhere in Latin America, experienced considerable pressure from liberationist forces during the 1960s and '70s. In Colombia these forces have been successfully tamed within a coherent model of "neo-Christendom"--a form of conservative modernization in which tradition has been consciously wielded, the Church has combined organizational reform with the reassertion of a vertical authority structure, and the interpretation of the Church's social responsibilities has been limited to support of governmental reform and the teaching of general principles. During the 1970s and early '80s there was some rhetorical criticism of Colombian governments from the bishops, but it remained within the historical tradition of appealing to the consciences of the powerful rather than to the consciousness of the poor, and the unity of the Hierarchy was maintained towards the disciplining of clerical rebels. This corporate control over its own ranks has probably been the Church's major contribution to the stability of the oligarchical regime. By linking itself to the regime, however, the Church has become dependent on the regime's ability to preserve relative openness and legitimacy, both of which appear to be declining with the continuing challenge of armed guerrillas and the growing authority of the army. The Church has won ecclesiastical orthodoxy, but at the cost of autonomous social influence. Neo-Christendom may prove to be vulnerable to future change, particularly if the military were to come to power.

RESUMEN

La Iglesia Católica en Colombia, como otras en Latinoamérica, experimentó una presión considerable de parte de fuerzas liberacionistas durante los sesenta y setenta. En Colombia estas fuerzas han sido domadas dentro de un modelo coherente de "neo-Cristiandad"--una forma de modernización conservadora en la cual la tradición ha sido ejercida de forma consciente. La Iglesia ha combinado la reforma organizacional con la reafirmación de una estructura vertical de autoridad, y la interpretación de las responsabilidades sociales de la Iglesia ha sido limitada al apoyo a la reforma gubernamental y a la enseñanza de algunos principios generales. Durante los sesenta y principios de los ochenta, hubo alguna crítica retórica a los gobiernos colombianos por parte de los obispos, pero ésta permaneció dentro de la tradición histórica de apelar a la conciencia de los poderosos antes que al conocimiento de los pobres, y la unidad de la Jerarquía fue mantenida para disciplinar a los clérigos rebeldes. Este control corporativo sobre sus propios rangos ha sido probablemente la mayor contribución de la Iglesia para la estabilidad del régimen oligárquico. Sin embargo, al respaldarse al régimen, la Iglesia se ha vuelto dependiente de la capacidad del régimen para preservar la apertura relativa y la legitimidad, las cuales parecen estar en declive con el continuo desafío de guerrillas armadas y la creciente autoridad del ejército. La Iglesia ha mantenido la ortodoxia eclesiástica, pero a costa de una influencia social autónoma. La neo-Cristiandad podrá ser vulnerable a un cambio futuro, particularmente si el ejército llegara al poder.



The State, in light of the traditional Catholic sentiment of the Colombian Nation, considers the Roman Catholic Apostolic Religion as a fundamental element of the common good and of the integral development of the national community (1973 Concordat, Article I).

Colombia confronts in the present moment one of the most acute crises in its history. In addition to profound errors in the political leadership of the State, there is a growing social and economic abyss, with the dislocation of the structures of Colombian society and increasing distance between the classes that compose it.... Political structures are inoperative in the realities of the country and neither permit Colombians to participate nor respond to their needs.... It is a commonplace in Colombia that democracy is formal and apparent; that elections, parties, the parliamentary system have no true popular participation (The Bishops' Conference, 1978).

I

Introduction

In Colombia the Catholic Church and oligarchical democracy have survived together. The Church was a midwife to the rebirth of the regime in its contemporary form, with the National Front in 1958.¹ In the quarter century since it has remained a reliable-- and many would say, important--support of that regime. In terms of its own goals, the Church has during the same period retained its distinctive and prominent place in public life. It is widely seen as the most powerful Church in Latin America and enjoys high regard in the Vatican Curia as a model for the region.

This record is remarkable in light of the political and religious upheaval elsewhere in Latin America during this time. Dramatic discontinuities and regime shifts have been the rule, revolutions and reversals of long historical processes. And the Catholic Church has been an important actor associated with these disruptions, in ways surprising and unanticipated by observers of Latin America. New theological concerns, organizational forms, and political conditions have propelled it into new kinds of social involvement. In settings as diverse as El Salvador, Peru, Chile, and Brazil, a certain broad direction of change is discernible. Its most obvious feature is a growing identification of the Church with the weak rather than the strong. It has moved away from its historic alliance with the

State to become instead the "voice of the voiceless," defender of human rights, champion of democracy. Behind this shift in its relationship to society is a fundamental change in the way that it conceives itself. Latin American Catholics no longer identify "the Church" as just the formal structures of the hierarchical institution. The Vatican Council's metaphor of the "pilgrim people of God" has been conducive to a Church that understands itself more as a living community. The authority of bishops is still important, but it is one exercised increasingly in response to and exchange with their flocks, the lower clergy and Christian laity.²

Against this panorama, Colombia stands out for its continuities and conservatism. The framework has somehow held. That is not because this has been a tranquil time in Colombia. Socially and economically the period has been as dynamic--and in many ways as disintegrative--as that of the rural Violence of the 1940s and '50s. New actors have crowded the political stage--guerrillas from the several sustained insurgencies, an army with increasing autonomy (and often authority), a growing if still divided movement of urban labor--but the play has remained recognizably that of oligarchical democracy. For its part the Church has experienced internal conflict unprecedented in its history. The new currents in theology, from the Council and the Latin American bishops' meeting (CELAM) at Medellín, moved many to action in Colombia as elsewhere. The guerrilla-priest Camilo Torres had many successors who believed (even though only a few took up his means of violence) that the Church must be allied with those struggling to change the basic structures of society. These "rebel priests," however, did not move the institution as they did in other places. The Colombian Hierarchy responded to them largely as a threat, not as an opportunity. The Church did change and modernize--but in a characteristically conservative way.

By the 1980s the Colombian Church occupied one end of the spectrum of the Latin American Church as a whole, with Brazil at the other end.³ It represented a

coherent model for the Church, that of "neo-Christendom."⁴ Its contrasts with more liberationist Churches were clear. The Colombian Church expressed some qualified autonomy from the State, but it continued to identify itself overwhelmingly with a larger regime of power. It was willing to preach in general terms in favor of social change, but not to permit priests and nuns to be active in popular social movements. Its Hierarchy presented themselves as "pastors" but continued to assert the most traditional conception of ecclesiastical authority. Neo-Christendom was a way of blending inherited institutional forms with organizational modernization and a "pastoral" commitment to social reform.

There is a certain elective affinity between Colombia's oligarchical democracy and its neo-Christendom Church. That Church was shaped by forces peculiar to itself, to its own theology and organization, but also by the context of Colombia's peculiar politics. Most of this essay deals with the processes by which this occurred since the early 1970s. The neo-Christendom Church also played some role in sustaining oligarchical democracy. In other places in Latin America the liberationist Church helped mobilize new social forces into politics and distanced itself from government, often in frank opposition. In Colombia, in contrast, the Hierarchy set narrow limits on criticism and restricted political opposition from within the Church. Its principal service to the regime was in preventing a vertical division in its ranks which might have had de-legitimizing effects, a theme that is taken up toward the end of this essay.

The following section of this essay examines neo-Christendom in Colombia through its most authoritative statement, the 1973 Concordat. That there should be such an international treaty at all is revealing of the Church's self-conception, and the parameters of its relationship with the State are elucidated by specific provisions and the Hierarchy's commentary on them. The next two sections, the core of the essay, deal with the 1970s and '80s and analyze the processes by which the neo-Christendom Church

was created. The third examines the pattern of Church involvement in political conflict during the period, sets out the bishops' strongest collective critique of the Colombian political system, and then shows how the limits established in that critique were applied to social-activists within the Church itself. The fourth part describes the institutional leadership that forged Colombia's remarkable episcopal unity, a key to its coherence around neo-Christendom. The final section briefly considers the future stability of such a Church and concludes that there are several dynamics, within the Church itself and in Colombian politics, that could impel it in quite a different direction.



Neo-Christendom In a Concordat

The character of the neo-Christendom Church can be elaborated along many dimensions, ranging from the ethic of salvation to the role of the priest. What is central for our purposes here is the concept of an ecclesiastical institution in an ideal tutelary role toward all of society, in union with the public authority of the State. It differs from historic "Christendom" (with its ancient and medieval connotations) in that Church and State may be formally separated and that the Church accepts the need for social reform. Neo-Christendom, however, represents a distinctly limited modernization of the Church's older concept of itself and of its mission in the world.⁵

The character of Colombia's neo-Christendom Church is well captured by the Concordat of 1973. A concordat is a rather exceptional regime for a national Church in the modern world. Essentially a treaty between the Vatican and a nation-state, it arose as an instrument for defining institutional boundaries and authority between Church and State, usually in conflictual situations (as with the first modern concordat, with Napoleon's France in 1801). Colombia's earlier Concordat of 1887 was signed after just such a period of

conflict. It was regarded by both the Vatican and the Colombian Church itself as quite advantageous, at the time and since. (It was subsequently modified slightly by additional agreements, but a more fundamental attempt at reform by a Liberal government failed in 1942). By the mid-1960s, however, there was considerable sentiment within the Colombian Church for a new Concordat. The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) had promulgated a new understanding of the Church and its mission in the modern world, and in Colombia itself the National Front brought a new political regime, one that constitutionally provided for governments of the historically anticlerical Liberals as well as of the Conservative party.

A major question about the new Concordat was whether Colombia should have one at all. Some politicians, particularly Liberals, believed that the Church's influence over social policy (as in marriage and divorce, education, and Indian territories) was too great and should properly be regulated by national government directly.⁶ This was a familiar anticlerical position within Colombia's political culture. More startling was opposition from within the Church itself. In broad terms these voices argued that the Church was hindered in its religious and pastoral mission by its ties to a particular political regime and that it was regulated and compromised as a marginal sort of public functionary.⁷ In other words, there were Colombian Catholics who believed that the new Concordat--in many of its specific provisions and just in the fact that it existed at all--tended to perpetuate a dependent, pre-conciliar conception of the Church.

The first important fact about the Concordat, then, is that the Colombian bishops unanimously concluded that their Church should have one.⁸ The bishops made clear in their "Pastoral Communiqué" of July 1973, on the occasion of the signing of the new Concordat, that they also regarded it as far more than a "cold, static juridical structure." Their commentary, "as Pastors," is meant to bring out "more than the letter, the spirit that animates all of its stipulations, and gives it, in the last instance, its reason for being."

Anyone, they write, who examines the new text carefully "will easily perceive that its essential and indisputable object is man."⁹

Man in his concreteness, as expressed in our times, carrier of worries and hopes, immersed in a changing and at times oppressive world; the whole man, material and spiritual, the subject of rights and duties, citizen and believer, who should carry out his unique vocation on this earth as well as in eternity.¹⁰

The first article of the 1973 document, the epigraph for this essay, sets basic parameters for the shift from the old to the new Christendom in Colombia. It guarantees "the Catholic Church and those who belong to it the full enjoyment of their religious rights," while recognizing religious liberty for other confessions. The "consideration" of the State "in view of the traditional Catholic sentiment of the Colombian Nation," certainly represents a change from the language of the 1887 Concordat (repeated in the 1957 plebiscite), which gave the State the responsibility to "protect and enforce respect" for the Church and its ministers and considered Catholicism an official religion, "the religion of Colombia."¹¹ There is also a shift in language in the 1973 text away from a static to a more dynamic conception of society. The Church is no more described in the classic language of the 19th century, as "an essential element of the social order" but rather as fundamental to "the common good" and "integral development."

The Church presents several images of itself in the Concordat and related documents. One is as "pilgrim," a Conciliar metaphor, far from traditional triumphalism. It is related to the new importance the Church would give to "service" to man and society and to its "pastoral" relationship to the faithful.¹² In the matter of marriage and divorce, for example, the Church moves away from its historical position that Catholic values must be expressed (and indeed are realized) through public authority in favor of a more autonomous pastoral role to Catholics within a liberalized civil arrangement. However,

while the "pilgrim" conception is new (and does suggest elements of change), the major image of the Church in the Concordat documents is far more ancient--and has quite different implications. It is that of the Church as "power" (Latin-Spanish potestad), in the tradition of the Two Swords, of Two Sovereignties, of Two Communities, civil and ecclesial, of a Church (with its own peculiar "nature") possessing somehow a parallel and coequal jurisdiction over society with the State.¹³ This is an image which recalls the Church's historical, hierarchical, and institutional character.

In its relationship with the Colombian State, the Church is concerned to assert its "rights" and "autonomy" on one hand, and on the other its sense of shared responsibility, "cooperation," and "collaboration" with the State in its "temporal tasks." The Concordat, the bishops wrote in their Pastoral Communiqué, represented "a cordial and dynamic dialogue between the two societies over an object of common responsibility." They continue, in a revealing way, elaborating the character of the relationship:

A dialogue in which one trusts the other and both conjugate their efforts for the integral promotion of man. A dialogue that is translated into juridical formulas to make it stable and to elevate it to the level of a bilateral treaty that guarantees the sovereignty of the contracting parties. A dialogue that excludes subjugation or surrender because those who carry out the dialogue are mutually respectful and are committed to the same people.¹⁴

The language here conveys the identification the Colombian bishops feel, whatever the formal facts of separation from the State, with a larger regime. This is such a deeply established historical pattern that it seems completely natural to them. The "subjects of the two communities," ecclesial and civil, "almost totally coincide," they note. The Church gives greater emphasis than in the past to establishing an active pastoral presence of its "own" structures in society, beyond the Catholic values formerly implemented through those of the State (for example, in family law). However, the Hierarchy does not believe that this new role requires the Church to divorce itself from civil authority. On the contrary it should retain the union with the latter to which it has always aspired, now in new

conditions. The autonomy the Church claims, then, is a qualified one. It does not envision itself at a critical distance from the State. It wishes to enjoy independence in its own sphere but at the same time reaffirms a larger interdependency.

There are several specific linkages of Church and State in the Concordat worthy of brief comment. One is the continued government role in nominating bishops. Although the new Article 14 formally recognizes that ultimate authority resides in the Papacy, it does retain the former right of the Colombian president to raise objections "of a civil or political character" to candidates in advance. Since the Hierarchy is crucial to the whole direction of the Church (as we will see more fully below), this is a significant potential power. It effectively extends the patronato in political, if not strictly legal, terms.¹⁵ At the same time the Church sought a wholly new form of governmental cooperation in matters of Church discipline (motivated rather transparently by problems with social-activist priests):

The illegitimate exercise of ecclesiastical jurisdiction or functions by those who lack canonical powers [misión] to exercise them, officially communicated by ecclesiastical authority to the appropriate state official, will be considered by him as a usurpation of a public function (Art. 22).

The official episcopal commentary explained that this extraordinary "punitive norm" was needed to defend "the rights of Catholics not to be deceived by those lacking canonical powers" who would "avail themselves of the ignorance of the people" to carry out "painful and prejudicial acts."¹⁶ In both of these provisions the Concordat reasserted the institutional, hierarchical conception of the Church and its intimate interdependence with the national state.¹⁷

Finally, in light of the growing role of the armed forces within Colombia's traditionally civilianist politics,¹⁸ Concordat Article 17, concerning the military chaplaincy, should be noted. The Vicaría Castrense was contemplated by the Concordat of 1887 (Art. 20) but not actually established until 1949. From that time the Archbishop of Bogotá

was given an honorary Generalship, an act of some symbolic interest.¹⁹ As the military's public influence has increased, the Church's links with it have expanded. In their official commentary, the bishops present this chaplaincy as "indispensable given the maximum importance that the Armed Forces have acquired in all countries in modern times." That importance derives, they go on, not just from the defense of "the sovereignty of national frontiers" but very much also from their "abnegation and sacrifices" as "guardians of internal peace," "permanently distributed and mobilized," as they are, "throughout all the territory of the Nation."²⁰



The Trajectory of the Church from the 1960s to the 1980s

The Colombian Church was not always a neo-Christendom Church; it became one. In the early 1970s, it still seemed quite possible that its "pastoral" commitments would bring it increasingly into political confrontation with the government and other forms of established power in Colombian society. Priests were actively involved in many different ways in the popular ferment of the times. Members of the Golconda group, inspired by the social-activist ideas of Camilo Torres, had taken part in the 1970 presidential campaign of Gustavo Rojas Pinilla and ANAPO, a serious challenge to the National Front regime. In the countryside priests were present in the rapidly growing peasant movement, often acting in solidarity with their flocks, even in militant initiatives such as land invasions. Bishops spoke more of the social functions of property and less of the rights of landed interests. The Jesuits, who had since the 1930s represented the activist edge of the Church in society, proposed "to give the social problem an absolute priority in [their] apostolate."²¹

In spite of the case of Camilo Torres, laicized for political activities in the mid-1960s, many priests continued to pursue what they took to be the demands of social justice at the grass roots of society. This led to a variety of conflicts with secular authorities. Each such case confronted bishops with choices--whether to accept and support such actions as the work of the Church, to disavow them as disruptive or subversive, or just to be silent. In the early 1970s this mechanism of lower-level action and upper-level response within the Church seemed to point towards a broadening conception of the Church's social-pastoral role. The Church "must go beyond the clear exposition of the principles that regulate economic and socio-political relationships," said Bishop Darío Castrillón to the Superior War College in 1973, "to the frank and brave denunciation of situations which violate the ethical order even when that may endanger the mere established order."²² Bishop Raúl Zambrano Camader pointed in 1969 to the need to break with past patterns: "in fulfilling our critical function toward the State, we have perhaps been too aggressive in religious or ecclesiastical questions, [while] in social matters our attitude has been conciliatory, [one] of understanding for the problems the government faces...."²³ It seemed possible that the new pastoral commitments of the Colombian Church could carry it toward the militant "prophetic" witness associated with the liberationist Church in many other places in Latin America.

Nevertheless, that is not what happened. Conflict certainly continued. Throughout the period since then, priests and nuns--and some bishops and lay people as well--were involved in confrontations with political authorities in many regions, from the local to the national level. There have always been parts of the Church that, at a given point in a particular situation, have been willing to oppose the policies of the government in power. Indeed, forces have continued to exist within the Church opposed to the larger regime of oligarchical democracy and the Church's place in it. However, the Church as a whole has never, over this considerable period of time, thrown its institutional weight

against either government or regime (in striking contrast to the Churches in so many other countries of Latin America). Moreover, the Church has never experienced a serious vertical split within itself, with one group of more progressive bishops and clergy arrayed against moderates and conservatives. The key here has been the Colombian Church's unparalleled episcopal unity, and the concept around which they unified was neo-Christendom.

The reasons for this are to be found within both the Church itself and the political context of Colombian democracy. The limits of protest can be seen in the broad trajectory of conflict.²⁴ There were frequent clashes between the Church and the Liberal López Michelsen government, 1974-78, a period of growing labor agitation. The toma de templo--the occupation of a church or cathedral by striking workers--became common, usually encouraged by local priests and nuns and at least condoned by a bishop. At one point during the height of agitation in 1976 some dozen churches were so occupied in different parts of the country. Widely covered by the press, these tomas paralleled similar actions of the Church elsewhere in Latin America. They seemed to translate into concrete form the general support for the rights of labor that the Colombian Church had since the 1950s expressed in theoretical terms.²⁵ Priests, nuns, and lay people were often arrested, in situations ranging from a protest of peasant farmers to alleged complicity with leftist guerrillas. With the coming of the second consecutive Liberal government, of Julio César Turbay Ayala (1978-82), episcopal protests over such arrests were increasingly accompanied by accusations of torture, documented by several international missions in 1980.²⁶

During both the López and Turbay administrations the Episcopal Conference issued broad statements highly critical of government policy. These sparked several seasons of polemics between the Hierarchy and politicians, complementing and framing the outbursts of individual bishops.²⁷ The character of the episcopal critique is worth

closer scrutiny, however, because it reveals the limits within which the Hierarchy chose to operate. The most extensive development of its analysis is found in two documents of 1978 and 1981.²⁸ The first, which seems not to have been prepared originally as a public statement,²⁹ employs terms which are not, to say the least, usual in the discourse of the Colombian Hierarchy. Indeed, much of the language--of "inoperative" political structures, of merely "formal and apparent" democracy, of social consequences traced to the "ownership of the means of production," of a "growing social and economic abyss" between the "classes" of Colombian society--was softened when the Hierarchy issued a more polished version three years later. ("Classes" now appear as "groups" within society, the lack of "true popular participation" becomes one of the "genuine participation of all citizens," and so forth.)³⁰ However, the fundamental frame of the analysis--the projection of the bishops' collective mentality--is the same in both documents.

The argument runs roughly as follows: Colombia is in the midst of one of the most acute crises of its history. This can be seen in great and growing economic inequalities, a society in which many remain unjustly excluded, a concentration of power and "superpoliticized" partisanship, a state bureaucracy of "generalized corruption" and "vertiginous and parasitic" growth, an excessive statism (which, the bishops noted, could afflict even "so-called democratic states"), all of which adds up to "a crisis of credibility and of confidence": "the Colombian People suffer a grave disillusion with those who govern them, with the national institutions and with the political class." This crisis is "opening the way for the colonization" of Colombia "by totalitarian ideologies and systems that destroy all liberties with dialectical materialism." This can be seen, the bishops argue, particularly in the country's trade unions, which the Church has supported when based on "principles of Christian faith and morality, for concord and peace and as instruments of legitimate defense of social justice." Instead, Colombian unions demonstrate "dangerous deviations," becoming "emerging oligarchies," following leaders "without conscience,

soul, [or] responsibility," abusing the right to strike, paralyzing public services, doing "extremely grave damage to the whole order of society."

Where, then, does the Hierarchy turn for solutions? The whole analysis, it is clear throughout, is addressed first and foremost to Colombia's "ruling class"--to "those who govern," to "the political class," to "the political leadership and social leaders that love Colombia," to the "fuerzas vivas" that the Hierarchy would convoke "not to feast on favors but share responsibilities." The bishops cite provisions from the Puebla documents to support the aspirations of the poor and their right to organize themselves, but their comments are conspicuously general and abstract. There is no sense of the actual fate of popular organization in Colombia over the previous decade--no intrusion of concrete events, save the extended criticism of unions.³¹

The bishops base their hope for action in awakening the consciences of the powerful, not in raising the consciousness of the weak. This is traditional in Colombia, and very much part of the concept of neo-Christendom. So, too, is the implicit understanding of how social change should come about: by "civic-political education," by appropriate attention to "human duties" and not just agitation over "human rights," by conciliation and cooperation and not by violence, whether employed by guerrillas or by government (civil authority is requested to "supervise subalterns firmly"). It is a mild recipe that the bishops finally give for "decisive, sustained, and hopeful action"--particularly in light of the gravity of the national situation they themselves have described. There is no reason to doubt their moral fervor or distress--indeed, their statement is a jeremiad--but their message is not a prophetic one. Beneath the lamentation and condemnation is an abiding awareness that they defend an institution and the political order of which it is a part. They may criticize the government, but in Colombia their real wrath is only aroused by "certain ideologies and party programs" motivated by "atheist laicism," and directed against "true religion and the only Church of Christ." That is, the Hierarchy may indeed rise when the

State threatens to break the pact that gives the Church public authority, as represented in "juridical norms" and the "due custody of public morality." The neo-Christendom Church is more actively pastoral than the traditional one and possesses far more institutional structures to relate it to complex modern society. However, at the same time, it is most reluctant to give up its historical cultural Catholicism--the identification of the Colombian nation with Catholic values, as expressed in the laws, symbols, and ceremonies of the Colombian State. Thus, the Hierarchy reacted in the 1970s to Liberal reformers:

They pretend to bring evolution and progress that clashes with our identity, because we are not Europe, with the decadence of the industrialized countries, while [at the same time], with a sophisticated, somewhat aggressive insolence, they pretend that to be a believer is only a private matter for individuals.... The country stands at a crossroads, [our choice is] one episode in the permanent antagonism between Good and Evil....³²

This is classical language of Christendom, and if we return to the political conflicts that involved the Church in the 1970s and early '80s, we can see how it was applied in practice. At the most immediate level, the presence of Liberal governments did encourage criticism expressing latent Conservative loyalties. López had campaigned in 1974 in favor of divorce, and Turbay's reforms for secondary education challenged traditional Church prerogatives.³³ Morality, whether embodied in public legislation or private corruption (and the latter exhibited orgiastic growth in the period), was a field on which bishops felt free to pronounce. Moreover, even social-activist priests bowed toward traditional Church conceptions (as in, for example, their attack on "the liberal mentality" or their invocation of Concordat protections for clerical personnel).³⁴ Anti-Liberal partisanship was surely only a minor motivation of Church political dissent in the period, at least directly, but it was one factor of vertical solidarity between many priests and bishops. That solidarity had existed historically (in the 20th century notably 1930-50) but was sorely tried by the new social activism from the mid-1960s on.

The pattern observable in the past decade is of a few individual bishops sometimes supporting priests and nuns in particular circumstances of grievance or protest, but of the Hierarchy as a whole kept solidly lined up with the regime. The Hierarchy expressed this regime support both directly and indirectly. At the time of every election in the period, it urged all citizens to take part (though not in favor of parties contrary to Christian principles) in order to defend the country's democratic institutions.³⁵ It consistently anathematized the guerrilla insurgency in the countryside. A few priests might follow Camilo Torres into the hills,³⁶ there might be sympathy for the spirit and sacrifice of this choice among many other clergy, and individual bishops might defend priests and nuns they believed wrongly accused by the government. As a group, however, the bishops never wavered in their choice for oligarchical democracy.

The indirect support of the Hierarchy was even more important. This it provided by marginalizing, controlling, and purging liberationist elements within the Church itself. Its general case for doing so was given in a substantial joint document, "Christian Identity in Action for Justice," issued in 1976.³⁷ Beyond their theological arguments, however, what was important was their pattern of action against liberationist elements in the many separate instances of political conflict. Any and all of the individuals, groups, or organizations of the Church that were publicly involved came under pressure from the central ecclesiastical institution to curb their activism. They were seen as a threat both to the existing social order and to Hierarchical authority, within the Church. The bishops had many weapons at their disposal--transferring personnel, cutting off funds, reorganizing lines of administration, withdrawing ministerial licenses, and (with the government) deporting foreign clergy--and all of them were brought into play over the course of the period against different offenders against neo-Christendom orthodoxy.³⁸

The key to asserting such controls successfully was maintaining episcopal unity. Without that--if there had been bishops willing consistently to support and encourage

grassroots social activism--the centralizing, conservative impulse could have been divisive to the Church as a whole. But were there not such bishops who in fact supported "their own" in many specific instances of conflict with political authorities--in Barrancabermeja and Bucaramanga, in Cartagena, Cali, and Cúcuta, in Ibagúe, Pereira, Medellín--during these years? There were, and they did--for a while. They may even have constituted a somewhat progressive caucus within the Bishops' conference, which was certainly not without its internal debates. Each of these bishops possessed all the ancient accumulated authority of the Ordinary in his own Diocese. But at the end of the day, none of them was willing to lead those forces that did not want a neo-Christendom Church. Why this was true undoubtedly has something to do with individual biographies, but it is explained to a great extent by collective structures of the Church institution--and the surrounding context of Colombia's oligarchical democracy.

IV

Explaining the Neo-Christendom Church: Institution and Leadership

There is a sense of inevitability about the trajectory of the Colombian Church in the last decades toward neo-Christendom. After all, it was long regarded as the most conservative and "traditional" Church in Latin America --strong as an ecclesiastical institution identified with a national society and public authority. Nevertheless, the Church that had emerged by the 1980s was by no means already formed in the 1960s. Then it was a Church with internal conflict unparalleled in the history of the national institution, sharply divided between longings toward a stable past, associations with a reformist present, and hopes for a transformed future. Its present character may be "traditional," but leaders within it had consciously to wield tradition to bring about the changes that have occurred.

Its most striking change is organizational modernization and centralization. Long a "national" Church, it has only in the last 30 years created a national organization. The key to that process has been a permanent secretariat for the Bishops' Conference (SPEC), begun in the 1950s, one of the first in Latin America. This bureaucracy started modestly, largely as a coordinating group for the bishops' annual meetings. Around the same time the Church created many other new structures, such as new seminaries to stimulate clerical vocations and new urban parishes and pastoral groupings for Colombia's swelling cities. It patronized new social initiatives for labor (the U.T.C.) and peasants (FANAL, Acción Comunal Popular) and initiated new institutes for sociological research and education (ICODES, CIAS, IDES) to interpret social problems and help relate Church action to them. This modernization constituted a historic change in the way the Church organized itself, but its immediate effects were centrifugal. To control the resulting dispersion the bishops turned to their new secretariat, SPEC.

How the SPEC asserted its central control in the 1970s has been described in several studies.³⁹ What may be less clear is why it succeeded. The Catholic Church had after all an ancient pattern of organization relating bishops in their dioceses directly to Rome. In Colombia the canonical independence of each bishop had been fortified historically by realities of regional difference and poor communications. Why should SPEC triumph with a project that, at least in several important respects, clashed precisely with national tradition?

Explanation must begin, as it often does in the Catholic Church, in Rome. For the Vatican Colombia occupied a place of preference within the larger panorama of the Latin American Church. Colombia was the first country in the region visited by a reigning Pontiff, Paul VI, in 1968 (to inaugurate an International Eucharistic Congress, on his way to the CELAM meeting in Medellín). Bogotá was chosen as the site for the secretariat of CELAM, the Latin American bishops' organization. So significant in opening the regional

Church in the 1960s, CELAM became central to reasserting orthodoxy in the 1970s. The fight (clearly supported by Rome) against the tendency grouped around "liberation theology" was directed by a young Colombian bishop, Alfonso López Trujillo, CELAM executive secretary from 1972 and its president in 1979. The favor he enjoyed with Rome was displayed in his meteoric ecclesiastical career, Archbishop of Medellín in 1979, admission to the College of Cardinals--its youngest member--in 1983. While heading the CELAM secretariat, López Trujillo continued as auxiliary bishop in Bogotá, thus occupying a key position in the confluence of the Colombian and international Churches. Colombian priests and prelates of his confidence received posts in the CELAM machinery. International sources of support from wealthy foreign Churches--such as those of the United States and West Germany, which had been so important in financing the new social initiatives of the 1960s--could be redirected toward structures reliably under Hierarchical control.⁴⁰

There can be no doubt that the neo-Christendom Colombian Church was significantly shaped by conservatism emanating from Rome. However, its character was also strongly molded by aspects of its own national tradition. The Colombian Church had long been a clerically-dominated institution, one which had never turned to or tolerated autonomous movements of lay Catholics (in contrast, for example, to Brazil or Chile). Moreover it was, in relative terms, rich in clerical Vocations from Colombia itself and so had never requested the large numbers of foreign priests and nuns that had brought "advanced ideas" to so many other countries in Latin America.⁴¹ Above all the Colombian Church had a triumphalist tradition, as described above--with traditional conceptions of the Church as "perfect society" and hierarchical ecclesiastical institution. All these characteristics strengthened the efficacy of ecclesiastical discipline employed on behalf of a conservative conception of the Church.⁴²

These elements of Colombian Church tradition were not perpetuated automatically. On the contrary, they had to be chosen and employed in new circumstances in order to create the neo-Christendom Church. The man most responsible for doing so was the Cardinal Archbishop of Bogotá, Aníbal Muñoz Duque. The challenge facing Muñoz Duque was somehow to marry the necessary modernization and new social concerns inherited from the 1960s Church to its traditions of hierarchical authority. The implications of what he achieved--the imposition of episcopal unity and centralized control at the cost of diminishing social influence--are debatable (and are discussed in the concluding section of this essay). That his leadership was crucial to this outcome is beyond question. His predecessor as Bogotá's Cardinal Archbishop was Luis Concha Córdoba. Son of a former president of the Republic, Concha was hardly an implacable enemy of Colombia's oligarchical regime. Patron and then prosecutor of Camilo Torres, he was hardly an unqualified friend of liberation theology. But there were more than a few signs, as Concha lingered on as Cardinal into the early 1970s, that the Colombian Church could have developed quite differently from the direction in which it was taken by Muñoz Duque.⁴³

It is not surprising that, as Archbishop of Bogotá, Muñoz Duque would associate the interests of the Church with those of the government. Such had been the attitude of all of his predecessors, in a tradition stretching back more than a century. He, as they, headed a national institution, its fortunes linked in myriad ways to the political order. He, as they, had to deal diplomatically with the government of the day (whatever its coloration)--government to which (not incidentally) he, of all the Colombian Church, enjoyed privileged access.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, as Archbishop Muñoz Duque exceeded all of his predecessors in his steadfastness and zeal in defending oligarchical democracy in difficult times. He stood publicly with the regime in every moment of crisis (most notably following the disputed election of 1970 and in the wave of strikes of 1976-77). Again and

again he defended Colombia's beleaguered political institutions as "democracy" itself and rejected any critique that the procedures and consequences of those institutions were undemocratic in practice. He was implacable against liberationist groups within the Church. In addition to employing an impressive range of ecclesiastical discipline against them, he was a master of the public gesture of repudiation. The most spectacular of these came in the midst of the 1976 hunger strike of bank employees who, with clerical and some episcopal support, were occupying various churches throughout the country. Within a period of just a few days Muñoz Duque refused to meet with a large group of priests and nuns supporting the strike, calling the police to have them thrown out of his palace; stepped forward in a blaze of publicity, before a solid phalanx of the capital's financial community, to bless the opening of a new bank; and graciously accepted his honorary title of Brigadier General in the armed forces, whom he went on to eulogize in a special Mass.⁴⁵

In controlling social-activist priests Muñoz Duque counted not only with the considerable traditional powers of a bishop but also with the new centralized organization of the Episcopal Conference. That was particularly important in allowing him to maintain unity among the bishops around neo-Christendom. They were predisposed to conservatism for many reasons, not least of which was their overwhelmingly curial or seminary (rather than pastoral) backgrounds.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, they could reach different conclusions about the best course of action in specific conflicts, and many of them did support social militance in particular situations. It was a considerable achievement (with significant consequences) to reach and sustain an unbroken common front. Fate had a hand in it: the country's two most socially progressive bishops, Raúl Camader Zambrano and particularly Gerardo Valencia Cano, the only episcopal member of the camilista Golconda group, were killed in separate airplane accidents in the early 1970s.⁴⁷ Muñoz Duque, however, had abundant institutional powers in his own hands. By the early 1980s

half of all the bishops in the country had taken office during his tenure, many of them in the new auxiliary positions he had created to strengthen hierarchical organization. Muñoz Duque was not adverse to refuting or reprimanding a fellow bishop upon occasion, but that was rarely necessary given the growing strength of the collective Bishops' Conference (and the location of many national ecclesiastical organizations within his own Archdiocese). The prominence given the position of individual prelates in the past (and often the public polemics between them) gradually faded before the unified voice of the Conference (and SPEC behind it), with its rule of unanimity for collective statements.

The most important reasons for what the Colombian Church became in the 1970s are found in the intentions and instruments of ecclesiastical elites. The neo-Christendom Church was also shaped, however, by limitations from the broader political context of the period. It seems appropriate to consider some of them in concluding this essay with some speculations about the staying power of this model of Church and of Colombia's regime of oligarchical democracy.

V

The Future of Neo-Christendom

The character of a national Church at a given moment in time always represents a kind of equilibrium among different forces within it. There may be greater or less coherence among those forces, but there are always tensions (and even contradictions) among them. In the 1970s and early 1980s the Colombian Church was led, forcefully, to cohere rather clearly around a conception of neo-Christendom. Those ecclesiastical elites responsible tended to look upon this model in terms of continuity and stability--a

new synthesis of the Church's timeless truths that would permit it to take part in orderly change. It is, however, an equilibrium vulnerable at several points.

Neo-Christendom in Colombia rests on a number of crucial judgments. One of these is that ecclesiastical orthodoxy is more important than social influence; another, closely related, is that the Church's social influence is better assured in acknowledged association with a political regime than in frank autonomy from it. This latter judgment depends, in turn, on that regime's effectiveness and legitimacy--and the strength of the alternatives that exist to challenge or replace it. The odds on all these bets favored neo-Christendom in the decade just past, but any of them could shift in the future and upset the existing equilibrium.

The social-activist forces within the Church have not disappeared; they are just much more prudent, both ecclesiastically and politically, than when they first appeared. From Camilo Torres in the mid-1970s, they tended to attack the institutional Church, and Archbishop Muñoz Duque in particular, frontally and publicly.⁴⁸ In time, especially after the events of 1976, they came to realize that such tactics were quixotic and counterproductive. The bishops had weapons and influence much greater than theirs, and popular religiosity was more conservative than they had initially understood.⁴⁹ With time they also became more realistic politically. They had begun believing that oppressive social experiences could be transformed rather directly into politically-relevant form. They took a "political option," but what they learned in the political arena--the limitations of popular consciousness, the weaknesses of popular organization, the endless divisions among "progressive forces," not to speak of the effectiveness of government repression--was sobering. Both the religious and the political experiences of Church progressives affected them in the same direction. As a result they have assumed a much lower profile, but they continue to exist in the interstices⁵⁰ of the ecclesiastical institution, more cautious but no less committed. Unlike an earlier generation, they will make great efforts

to stay within the Hierarchical Church. They constitute a significant minority of the clergy-- and their numbers could multiply rapidly if conditions were to change.⁵¹

The progressives represent a permanent alternative to the neo-Christendom strategy of attempting to bring about social change by teaching general principles and supporting government reform. That strategy is vulnerable because at some point it can be judged to have failed. The circumstances that lead to such a political moment of truth are, of course, mysterious, but for the Church itself disquieting signs have already appeared. One is the measured decline in religious observance in all its traditional forms, so long a point of pride.⁵² Another, more diffuse but noted widely, is the Church's manifest inability to speak with any effect to Colombia's profound, prolonged "moral crisis." In this of all areas of social life, the Church should be able to make a difference. Yet, as in the Violence of the 1940s and '50s, it seems marginal to the course of events and powerless even to interpret their moral meaning. Reviewing the spectrum of major issues in public life over the last 20 years, it is difficult to find any on which the position of the Church has made a difference.⁵³ The Hierarchy might regularly urge the citizenry to save Colombian democracy at election times, but that had no discernible influence on massive rates of abstention. The Hierarchy may wield ecclesiastical discipline to ensure orthodoxy within their institution, but what is their real authority in society if no one listens to them?

The question will not go away. The Colombian Church is extremely proud of its social influence, achieved historically in close association with a political regime. It would be surprising if leaders did not appear within it at some point who were distressed over its decline and willing to rethink that association. In that circumstance they, like their counterparts in many other places in Latin America, might support their clergy acting in solidarity with movements of the poor, even when opposed to the government.

The equilibrium sustaining neo-Christendom, then, could be upset by shifts on the side of Church and society. It could also be undone by changes on the side of politics. The continuities of oligarchical democracy in the period were the inescapable context for the successful creation of a neo-Christendom Church. They provided the regime stability upon which the Hierarchy counted (and which it collectively did its part to foster). Several conditions of this regime stand out as particularly crucial. One was the maintenance of a relatively constitutional, relatively open, relatively legitimate politics. The other was the absence of a successful mass-based challenge to the two traditional parties. Either of these conditions could change in the future.

Start with the second. Several generations of developmentalist reform have failed significantly to alter the distribution of power in society or to improve the lot of the poor. This is widely recognized in Colombia, including by the bishops. The reasons such social disparities have not been translated into political terms are complex,⁵⁴ but the sheer fact that they have not is of great importance. The only sustained challenge to oligarchical democracy has come from the rural guerrillas, and even they--whatever their ability to survive--have never succeeded in building a popular base. As long as they remain the only real political alternative, the Hierarchy has no difficulty in maintaining its partisanship for the regime. Even in the most liberationist Churches in Latin America, bishops have sanctioned insurrectionary violence only in the rarest of circumstances (such as the last stages of the rising against Somoza), when there was some expectation that it could succeed. Those circumstances never arose in Colombia in this period. The clerical left sometimes appeared to believe that revolutionary triumph was imminent, and guerrilla-priests certainly occupied the highest places in its pantheon of martyrs. But all this had the effect of allowing the bishops to include all forms of social-activism in their unwavering condemnation of violence.

The context of oligarchical democracy facilitated the bishops' drawing the line for social action as they did: against social-activism and violence rather than between the two, as in more liberationist Churches.⁵⁵ They lacked the incentive, as it were, of a powerful popular movement that might really alter the premises of the regime. As spokesmen of neo-Christendom, they might offer support for the existing regime, although their declining social authority rendered at least questionable the real effects of such positive legitimation. Their most significant contribution to sustaining the system was to hinder its de-legitimation--by maintaining Hierarchical unity and controlling those social-activist elements that might have split the Church itself. Neo-Christendom is the ecclesiastical dimension of a broader traditional regime of a general historical type: with "relatively autonomous collectivities or corporations under the ruler, but controlling their own members, pyramids of authority linked to higher authorities at their apexes, stratified social hierarchies in which each stratum recognize[s] its place."⁵⁶

In Colombia the corporation most likely to upset this arrangement is the army. The first condition crucial to the regime's survival to date has been the ability of civilian party politicians to retain ultimate (if diminished) authority. Their governments in the last decades have frequently been harsh, arbitrary, and (certainly in social and economic terms) undemocratic. But they have maintained a degree of openness, competition, and legitimacy. In the face of the guerrilla insurgency, however, the power of the army has grown to proportions that have no precedent in Colombian history. Civilian control has been in doubt in all three of the last governments.⁵⁷ In the throes of a deep, continuing social crisis--and even with the immense inherited skills of the political class--it is not difficult to imagine circumstances that might lead the army at some point to take power directly.

What would the Church do in such a situation? Much would depend on particulars, of course, but it would certainly mean the end of neo-Christendom. Part of the

Church would undoubtedly support the new regime. It did so after the last army takeover, in 1953, and it would be impelled by the same considerations of Realpolitik and its own long historical tradition. Since that era it has considerably strengthened its own ties to the military institution (notably by creating the Military Chaplaincy, headed by a bishop), in recognition of its "maximum importance" as "guardian of internal peace" (in its words at the time of the 1973 Concordat).

The bishops would have great difficulties, however, in maintaining unity under a military regime. They were divided under the relatively mild dictatorship of Rojas Pinilla in the 1950s and ultimately turned against him. Violations of human rights were one factor even then. Since that time the Colombian military has imbibed a doctrine of "National Security" that has been the catalyst of Church opposition to authoritarianism wherever it has arisen in Latin America. The Colombian Church has also changed since then. Its far greater social consciousness has been tamed within neo-Christendom. However, neo-Christendom counted with a stable regime of oligarchical democracy--not with a military government likely to be both more brutal and less predictable.

ENDNOTES

- 1 See my "Redemocratization, the Church, and Democracy in Colombia," in Bruce Bagley, Francisco Thoumi, and Juan Tokatlian, eds., Colombia Since the National Front (Boulder: Westview, forthcoming 1987).
- 2 A short list of the most important studies in English of the new Latin American Church in its relation to politics includes: Phillip Berryman, The Religious Roots of Rebellion (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1984); Thomas C. Bruneau, The Political Transformation of the Brazilian Church (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1974) and also The Church in Brazil (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981); Edward L. Cleary, O.P. Crisis and Change: The Church in Latin America Today (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1985); Daniel Levine, Religion and Politics in Latin America (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981) and his edited Churches and Politics in Latin America (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1980); Scott Mainwaring, The Catholic Church and Politics in Brazil (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986); and Brian H. Smith, The Church and Politics in Chile (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982).
- 3 The chapters on Brazil by Thomas Bruneau and Scott Mainwaring and on Colombia by Daniel Levine in Levine, ed., Religion and Political Conflict in Latin America (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986) give a good feel for the contrasts.
- 4 The concept is both analytical and polemical. It originated among those critical of such a conception of the Church's mission; hence those who support this conception do not use the term. However, it is a useful concept to describe certain relationships to society and public authority which are manifest both in what the Church does and its explanations for that behavior. It is for its analytical utility that the term is used here. A good example of the theological debate, from a liberationist perspective, is Pablo Richard, Mort des chrétientés et naissance de l'Eglise (Paris: Centre Lebre, Série Amérique Latine No. 3, 1978).
- 5 The most extensive efforts to apply the concept of neo-Christendom to Colombia's Church are Luis Alberto Alfonso, Dominación religiosa y hegemonía política (Bogotá: Punta de Lanza, 1978), esp. pp. 84-96 and, following Alfonso, the chapters by Rodolfo de Roux in Historia general de la Iglesia en América Latina, Vol. VII, Colombia y Venezuela (Salamanca, Spain: Ediciones Sígueme, 1981), esp. pp. 546-51 and 562-63. See also the thoughtful analysis of Levine, Religion and Politics in Latin America, passim, esp. pp. 33-34, 304-05. A useful analysis for comparative purposes is Mainwaring, Church and Politics in Brazil, ch. 2, which argues that the Brazilian Church cannot be thought of in terms of neo-Christendom after 1955.
- 6 See e.g. Andrés Holguín, Análisis del nuevo concordato (Bogotá: Revista Derecho Colombiano, 1973) and Pedro Pablo Camargo, El régimen concordatorio colombiano (Bogotá: Sociedad Colombiana de Abogados, 1971). A defense is given by the Colombian Ambassador to the Holy See, Antonio Rocha, Matrimonio, educación y actualidad concordatoria (Bogotá: Editorial Revista Colombiana, 1975).
- 7 See e.g. "Un Concordato 'con intencionados criterios'" in anali-CIAS, 2/17 (Sept. 1973) 3-17; E. Díaz Ardila, "El Nuevo Concordato," Revista Javeriana (Oct. 1973) 381-88; de Roux, Historia general, pp. 578-79; and the prescient Libertad religiosa en Colombia by Father Manuel Alzate R. (Cali: Editorial Pacífico, 1969), one of the members of the Golconda group of priests inspired by Camilo Torres.

⁸ Conferencia Episcopal de Colombia, Concordato de 1973, 3rd ed. (Bogotá: Secretariado Permanente del Episcopado [SPEC], 1983), pp. 40-41.

⁹ Colombian ecclesiastical language is invariably sexist and throughout this essay will be thus rendered into English.

¹⁰ Quotations in this paragraph are from "Comunicado pastoral del comité permanente de la Conferencia Episcopal con ocasión de la firma del nuevo concordato" in pp. 41, 33. Quotations in the following paragraphs are from either that Communiqué or from the text of the Concordat itself, ibid., pp. 9-19.

¹¹ The text of the 1887 Concordat is available most conveniently in English in J. Lloyd Mecham, Church and State in Latin America, rev. ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1966), p. 126-31. With all subsequent emendations it may be found in Constitución política de la república de Colombia, 16th ed. (Bogotá: Editorial Voluntad, 1967), pp. 153-200.

¹² Concordato de 1973, pp. 33, 38, 41.

¹³ ibid. Art. 2, and pp. 34, 36, 41, 52.

¹⁴ ibid., p. 41. The unusual "conjugate" ("to unite sexually, as in marriage": Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary) has been used to render "conjugan," consistent with the marriage imagery of the passage.

¹⁵ The official commentary by the SPEC argues that legally the "last vestige" of the patronato was abolished because the government would no longer formally present candidates. See ibid. p. 59.

¹⁶ ibid. p. 62.

¹⁷ The bishops' very traditional image of the good Catholic citizen is also apposite here: "The Catholic, faithful subject of the earthly and celestial cities, has a clear consciousness of his duty as member of both societies and in carrying out the laws of both realizes himself as man and as believer" ("Comunicado," ibid., p. 36).

¹⁸ The country's 19th-century civil wars were fought by party-mobilized armies. The professional military institution was marginal to politics in the 20th century until its expansion with the rural Violence of the 1940s. See Francisco Leal Buitrago, Estado y política en Colombia (Bogotá: Siglo XXI, 1984), pp. 171-221; James L. Payne, Patterns of Conflict in Colombia (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968); Anthony Maingot, "Colombia: Civil-Military Relations in a Political Culture of Conflict," (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Florida, Gainesville, 1967); and Richard Maullin, Soldiers, Guerrillas, and Politics in Colombia (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, Heath, 1973). When General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla took power in 1953, it marked the first successful military coup in Colombia since 1854.

¹⁹ See Juan Ignacio Moreno, S.J., "Notas históricas sobre el vicariato castrense en Colombia," Revista Javeriana, 80/399 (Oct. 1973) 389-92.

²⁰ Concordato de 1973, p. 60. Emphasis added.

- 21 For the Jesuit priority, see anali-CIAS, 6 (Sept. 1972) 10, one issue of a journal that covered Church involvement in the countryside in the early 1970s, for which see also Cristina Escobar, Trayectoria de la ANUC (Bogotá: CINEP, 1982?). Concerning agrarian reform, the bishops began talking about the "essential social function" of property in the mid-1960s, although in a highly qualified way. By the early 1970s they had dropped most of their earlier hedging; see, e.g., Conferencia Episcopal de Colombia, La justicia en el mundo (Bogotá: SPEC, 1972), p. 66. On clerical activism on behalf of ANAPO, see Alfonso, Dominación religiosa, pp. 56-57, 191, and Germán Rama, El sistema político colombiano: frente nacional y ANAPO (Asunción: Centro Paraguayo de Estudios Sociológicos, 1970). For the evolving Church relationship with unions in the period, see Kenneth Medhurst, The Church and Labour in Colombia (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), pp. 95-209. For a general treatment of the period, my "The Contemporary Church: The Political and the Pastoral," in R. Albert Berry, Ronald G. Hellman, and Mauricio Solaún, eds., The Politics of Compromise: Coalition Government in Colombia (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1980), esp. pp. 222-35.
- 22 Castrillón quotation: "Política y pastoral," Tierra Nueva (Bogotá), Vol. 2 (July 1973) 90.
- 23 Quoted by de Roux, "La Iglesia colombiana desde 1962" in Historia general, p. 576.
- 24 Useful collections of documentation on the period are: SAL [Sacerdotes para América Latina], Un compromiso sacerdotal en la lucha de clases: documentos 1972-78 (Bogotá: 1978, no publisher listed); the "Documents DIAL," French translations by the Diffusion de l'Information sur l'Amérique Latine (Paris) of materials relating to the Latin American Church, with some 50 on Colombia 1973-84, including the particularly useful "Colombie: dix ans de présence chrétienne dans la société" (D-460, 1978); and for the 1980s, the left lay monthly, Solidaridad (Bogotá). In addition to broader scholarly studies of the Colombian Church, already cited, helpful overviews of the period are Andrés Mendoza, "La Iglesia en Colombia," América Latina, 20 (Brussels: Informes de Pro Mundi Vita, 1980); "Un pays catholique et conservateur: La Colombie," Informations Catholiques Internationales 515 (Juin 1977) 29-36; and "Les deux Eglises de Colombie," Informations Catholiques Internationales 558 (Jan. 1981) 37-39f. Church involvement in events of 1975-76 is documented and analyzed in La Iglesia en conflicto? Controversia 44 (Bogotá: CINEP, 1976).
- 25 See Medhurst, The Church and Labour, for a history.
- 26 See "Informe de una misión de Amnistía Internacional a la República de Colombia" (London: Amnistía Internacional, 1980), and "Informe sobre la situación de los derechos humanos en la República de Colombia" (Washington, D.C.: Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, Organización de los Estados Americanos, 1981).
- 27 The years 1976 and 1978 saw the most collective confrontations, which were preceded and followed by the older-style individual encounters.
- 28 The first was a small part ("Síntesis del diagnóstico de la realidad colombiana") of the very large Colombian statement prepared for the 1979 CELAM meeting at Puebla, Mexico: III Conferencia general del episcopado latinoamericano, Aportes de las conferencias episcopales; Auxiliary Book 3 (Bogotá: CELAM, 1978?). The second incorporates this analysis (as "Horizonte socio-político") within the Hierarchy's general pastoral message following their annual meeting: Conferencia Episcopal de Colombia, "Mensaje pastoral de la XXXVII Asamblea plenaria del episcopado colombiano" (Bogotá: SPEC, 1981). The first aroused a public polemic, the second did not. See the useful commentaries "Aporte para la tercera conferencia del episcopado latinoamericano," Aportes (Bogotá), No. 8 (Aug 1978) 5-19; "A propósito el enfrentamiento entre la

jerarquía y los políticos," Aportes, No. 7 (July 1978), 1-16; and "Los sectores populares deberían ser interlocutores de la jerarquía," Solidaridad (Bogotá), No. 30 (Nov. 1981) 18-19.

²⁹ See "A propósito," Aportes, pp. 3-4. The document was leaked to the press, quite possibly by more progressive (or anti-Liberal) sectors within the Secretariat of the Bishops' Conference.

³⁰ All quotations which follow in the text are taken from the 1981 document, "Mensaje pastoral."

³¹ The bishops do express their traditional preference for the country's peasants in terms ("los más adictos creyentes de la Iglesia") which seem to confirm Marx's most famous dictum about religion.

³² Conferencia Episcopal, "Mensaje pastoral," pp. 30, 31, 37.

³³ Anti-Liberal feeling in the Church is reflected in the commentary on the period by the reliably reactionary Humberto Bronx [Fr. Jaime Serra Gómez] in Historia moderna de la Iglesia colombiana, 2nd ed. (Medellín: Editorial Argemiro Salazar, 1981?) pp. 451-64.

³⁴ See e.g. CINEP, Una Iglesia en conflicto? p. 19 and Iglesia y justicia militar, Controversia 74 (Bogotá: CINEP, 1979?). The Conservative background of General Rojas Pinilla was perhaps not wholly incidental to the appeal of ANAPO among the Golconda priests.

³⁵ The 1976 statement was representative, asserting that it was "a solemn duty to vote in order to save Colombia," although it was "not permitted to a Catholic, like any citizen of good faith and good will," to vote for candidates upholding "Marxist doctrines or policies." See "Colombie: l'Episcopat et les élections municipales," D-303 DIAL (May 6, 1976), 2, and the critical reply of left Catholics, "Colombie: à la veille des élections municipales," D-299 (Apr. 15, 1976). For other examples and other elections, see SAL, Un compromiso sacerdotal, pp. 97-102, 189-92, 233-39. The broader analysis of the SAL group, "La 'democracia colombiana,'" is an intelligent critique, particularly of party clientelism (ibid., pp. 243-63).

³⁶ Subsequent guerrilla-priests killed in action included the Spaniard Domingo Laín (1974), Florentino Agudelo (1976), and Diego Uribe (1981).

³⁷ Conferencia Episcopal de Colombia, Identidad cristiana en la acción por la justicia (Bogotá: SPEC, 1976). The reply from "Numerous Christian Groups," Identidad cristiana en la acción por la justicia: una versión alternativa, appeared the following year (no publication information).

³⁸ Bishops were not shy about laundering dirty linen in public. They name names of offending Church groups quite explicitly in, for example, their 1976 "Identidad cristiana" and 1981 "Mensaje pastoral," both cited above. Among notable examples of administrative reorganization to assert central institutional control were the 1972 takeover of the formerly Jesuit Institute of Doctrine and Social Studies (IDES), the taming of several liberationist catechetical programs (including Denuncia, under the Salesian Fathers) in 1973-75, and the closing of the Pastoral Institute for Youth (IPLAJ), involving three different Religious Orders, in 1975. See Wilde, "Political and Pastoral," pp. 220-23; Levine, Religion and Politics, pp. 221-22, 242-48; and Mendoza, "La Iglesia en Colombia," p. 40-41.

- 39 In addition to sources in the preceding footnote, see Medhurst, Church and Labour, and Juan Botero Restrepo, Breve historia de la Iglesia Colombiana (Medellín: Editorial Copiyepes, 1983), pp. 170-72.
- 40 An earlier study of organizational conflict in the Colombian Church--which anticipated a rather different direction than what actually occurred--is David Mutchler, The Church as a Political Factor in Latin America (New York: Praeger, 1971). Another international ecclesiastical personage who has played an interesting role during this period is Roger Vekemans, S.J. Vekemans was a prominent figure in Chile in the 1960s, especially in Church-Christian Democrat relations. He came to Bogotá in 1971 and founded a study center (CEDIAL) and theology journal (Tierra Nueva) that have been conservative redoubts in the battle against Liberation Theology.
- 41 Colombia has had historically one of the most favorable ratios of priests to population in Latin America. In 1980 there were 5,330 priests in the country, one for each 5,733 inhabitants (Secretariado Nacional de Pastoral Social, Aproximación a la realidad colombiana [Bogotá: SNPS, 1981], p. 108). Of the total number of priests, diocesan predominated over Religious, 3,284 to 2,046 (Ibid., p. 103). Foreign clergy are generally members of Religious Orders. The unusually national character of the Colombian Church is illustrated by the very low proportion of its foreign Religious, 18%, as compared to 38% in El Salvador, 49% in Brazil, 55% in Chile, and 68% in Peru. See CLAR, Estudio sociográfico de los religiosos y las religiosas en América Latina (Bogotá: Secretariado de la CLAR, 1971), p. 40.
- 42 Even the historic predominance of diocesan rather than Religious priests in Colombia (previous footnote) facilitated the imposition of Hierarchical control, since bishops exercise authority directly over such "secular" priests, not mediated as for Religious through the parallel structure of Orders.
- 43 See, e.g. Concha's sympathy toward the Golconda group in 1969-70; Alfonso, Dominación religiosa, pp. 192-93.
- 44 This historical pattern is surprising only to those (and they are many) who believe that the Colombian Church was monolithically militant on behalf of the Conservative party. In fact, the Church had always been divided--pro-government and opposition--whenever the Liberals were in power (as it was often divided by different Conservative factional loyalties when that party held the government). This pattern is described in my larger study, nearing completion, of "Politics and the Church in Colombia."
- 45 See Una Iglesia en conflicto? Cf. the long open letter of grievance of SAL, Un compromiso sacerdotal, pp. 193-207.
- 46 See the analysis of career patterns in Hubert Schwan and Antonio Ugalde, "Orientations of the Bishops of Colombia Toward Social Development, 1930-1970" in Journal of Church and State 16 (1974) 481-83. Cf. Levine, Religion and Politics, pp. 105-6.
- 47 See Monseñor Valencia (Bogotá: Librería Stella, 1972) and "Gerardo Valencia Cano, obispo de los pobres," Solidaridad 31 (Feb. 1982) 23-34. On Zambrano, see Levine, Religion and Politics, pp. 262-85 passim.
- 48 A typical assertion, part of a lengthy document in 1973 on the fifth anniversary of Medellín, was that "the Hierarchy, part of the clergy, and part of the laity belong to the oppressor class, or are its allies. A sector of the clergy and the great majority of the

Christian people are within the oppressed class" (SAL, Un compromiso sacerdotal, p. 80). Such attacks are a recurrent theme running through the collected documents in the volume. The most elaborate denunciation of Muñoz Duque took the form of an open letter to him in April 1976 and carries a litany of accumulated grievances. Similar messages illustrating this style were sent out of hierarchical channels directly to the Bishops' Synod of 1974 and the CELAM meeting of 1976. See ibid., pp. 115-22, 183-85.

⁴⁹ See SAL, ibid., p. 282; "Una Iglesia en crisis," Solidaridad 20 (Nov. 1980) 11-16; and Francisco Zuluaga, S.J. "La religiosidad popular en Colombia," La Antigua (Panamá) 26, 109-22.

⁵⁰ Cf. the parallel judgment of Daniel Levine, "Continuities in Colombia," Journal of Latin American Studies, 17 (1985). 312-13.

⁵¹ SAL, Un compromiso sacerdotal, documents this learning process. Cf. the confirming assessment of Levine, "Colombia: Institutional Church and the Popular," in Levine, ed. Religion and Political Conflict, pp. 202-03. For the distribution of different groupings within the Church at present, see "Una Iglesia en crisis," Aportes, and de Roux, "La Iglesia colombiana," Historia General, pp. 586-89.

⁵² Bronx, Historia moderna, pp. 464-66.

⁵³ Divorce is one for which it did, but the exception proves the rule. Not even in family planning--another of the Church's most traditional core concerns--was the government prevented from carrying out one of Latin America's most effective programs. Cf. the analysis of defeat by Bronx, ibid., pp. 453-59.

⁵⁴ Bruce Bagley has made an important effort to analyze the patterns of Colombian politics as "inclusionary authoritarianism"--precisely not imperfect democracy--in "National Front and Economic Development," Robert Wesson, ed., Politics, Policies and Economic Development in Latin America (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1984), pp. 124-60.

⁵⁵ Cf. Levine, Religion and Politics, on social activism vs. social activation, pp. 139-40, 179-201.

⁵⁶ Eric Hobsbawm, "Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914," in Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., The Invention of Tradition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 265.

⁵⁷ See Gustavo Gallón Giraldo, Quince años de estado de sitio en Colombia, 1958-1978 (Bogotá: Ed. América, 1979) and La república de las armas, Controversia 109-110 (Bogotá: CINEP, 1983). The army was a continuing source of opposition to efforts of the Betancur government to achieve an end to the guerrilla insurgency. For relevant documentation, see Luis Villar Borda, ed., Oposición, insurgencia y amnistía (Bogotá: Editorial Dintel, 1982).