THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

Moral Agency in the Context of Social Sin:
The Perspectives of the Latin American Bishops (CELAM) and John Paul II

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Faculty of the

School of Theology and Religious Studies

Of The Catholic University of America

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

By

John A. Barba

Washington, D.C.

2011

Moral Agency in the Context of Social Sin:
The Perspectives of the Latin American Bishops (CELAM) and John Paul II

John A. Barba, Ph.D.

Director: William A. Barbieri, Ph.D.

One of the seminal developments in Roman Catholic theology since the Second Vatican Council has been an expanding comprehension of the reality of social sin. The bishops of Latin America identified the systemic poverty around them as a "situation of sin" and called for a "preferential option for the poor" as necessary for both personal and ecclesial conversion. The teachings of John Paul II took cognizance of the "new" reality of social sin while still preserving a sense of individual moral agency. The issue of how best to comprehend moral agency in the context of social sin has persisted, however: the matters of *accountability* for the perpetuation of social sin and *moral responsibility* for rectifying the structural manifestations of sin have been difficult to resolve.

The dissertation begins with a historical review of some of the core principles and theological suppositions regarding sin and moral agency as articulated in the Catholic theological tradition. Two key sets of post-Vatican II sources are investigated in detail: synodal documents of the Latin American bishops (produced at the conclusion of the CELAM conferences at Medellín in 1968 and at Puebla in 1979), and selected writings from the teaching of Pope John Paul II (most especially the texts, *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, and *Ut unum sint*).

A heuristic framework comprising five questions is established then to reveal how the various texts do in fact explicate moral agency and ethical responsibility in relation to the broad dynamic of social sin. The magisterial documents are examined in detail in terms of their response to each of the five questions posed. A synthesis addressing comparability is constructed: in what respects the documents concur with one another, where their positions diverge, and the degree to which the texts are themselves internally consistent in relation to the five heuristic questions. In light of that synthesis, the dissertation concludes with a short chapter highlighting some additional areas of theological reflection related to the topic of sin which may be of use in future efforts to provide a coherent Catholic accounting of ethical demands in relation to social sin.

This dissertation by John A. Barba fulfills the dissertation requirement for the doctoral degree in Theology and Religious Studies, approved by William A. Barbieri, Ph.D. as Director, and by William Loewe, Ph.D., and Cynthia Crysdale, Ph.D., as Readers.

_____

William A. Barbieri, Ph.D., Director

_____

William Loewe, Ph.D., Reader

_____

Cynthia Crysdale, Ph.D., Reader

To Margell

The poor man is devoured by the pride of the wicked:
he is caught in the schemes that others have made.

Psalm 10:2

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Although some observers, perhaps out of despair over the modern world, might claim that people today seem to have lost all sense of sin, it would perhaps be more accurate to state that commonly accepted ways of thinking and talking about sin have changed considerably over time—in step with evolving conceptualizations of ourselves as moral agents—but that the core understanding of what constitutes sin has actually remained quite consistent.[1] To make such an assertion is not to suggest that sin is easily reducible to just *one* thing, or that its many and full dimensions are easily apprehended; indeed, the idea of sin is complex and historically multivalent in meaning.[2] Whichever meaning one chooses to highlight in appraising the nature of sin, the prevalence of its occurrence in human history would appear undeniable.

---

[1]Such is the contention of Seán Fagan, S.M. (though he concedes that the notion of sin in the world at large has been "trivialized" to some extent); see his provocatively titled book, *Has Sin Changed?* (Dublin, Ireland: Gill and Macmillan Ltd., 1978). See also David H. Kelsey, "Whatever Happened to the Doctrine of Sin?" in *Theology Today* 50 (July 1993), 169-78.

[2]James Gaffney provides a useful survey of the several terms used to delineate sin in the Bible, highlighting the complexity of the ideas expressed. The various words used in Hebrew for sin are metaphorical, each offering a slightly different aspect of the idea. (1) **h̬eṭ'** (*hattah*) refers first to missing the mark or failing to achieve a goal (Jgs 20:16); the term is then used by analogy to describe a failure of duty or obligation—either human or divine (1 Sm 2:25). [The New Testament word, **hamartía** (ἁμαρτία), is a military shooting term and also refers first to a physical "missing" of the mark; it is then extended metaphorically to imply moral irresponsibility.] (2)**ʿāwôn** is the second most frequently found term, and is used theologically to describe "crookedness" (in contrast to uprightness or straightness); the implication is not just errant behavior, but perverted character, an inner distortion of what is right before God (as in *iniquities*, from Ps 38:4). (3) **pāša** refers more narrowly to breaking a contract or treaty and the bonds of relationship implicit therein (2 Kgs 8:20, 22); by extension the term refers to violation of the covenant between God and Israel. See James Gaffney, *Sin Reconsidered* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1983), 15-21.

Another feature of the notion of sin that seems ineluctable is the complex relationship between sin-as-action and the sinner-as-actor. Sin may be an abstract term, but it is not just an abstraction: sin binds to the human agent who effectuates it in such a profound way that, at the core, the person can scarcely be separated from her or his actions. Despite the pious admonition that one should "hate the sin and not the sinner," the two are simply not easily separated. In fact, this intertwining of sin and agent has remained a constant in theological discourse throughout the ages—and is still a topic current today, as this dissertation will demonstrate.

We learn early on in the Bible that humankind (actually as a consequence of the Fall), is endowed with the divine attribute of "knowing what is good and what is bad" (Gn 3:22).[3] There can be, then, no escaping the moral responsibility to use our human capacity of reason[4] to come to know what is pleasing to God—and what is not. What we *do* with this knowledge, however, especially in the assumed context of God's free offer of grace and

---

[3] All biblical quotations are taken from *The New American Bible* (South Bend, IN: Greenlawn Press, 1991).

[4] The use of reason in the context of moral decision-making has been a staple of the Catholic theological tradition since its inception. It was also a particular interest of the German Jewess and twentieth-century moral philosopher Hannah Arendt who was careful to differentiate thinking from knowing. Though not trained formally as a theologian, Arendt was familiar with both Christian theology and modern European philosophy from the Enlightenment forward. Freely ascribing precedence in the idea to Immanuel Kant, Arendt distinguishes thinking—an interior dialogue with the "self" that accounts for the function of reason and leads to understanding and judgment-making—from intellect, a cognitive extension to the world outside of the self that produces knowledge (*scientia*) and provides the basis for action. See Hannah Arendt, "Thinking and Moral Considerations," in *Responsibility and Judgment*, edited and with an introduction by Jerome Kahn (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 2003), 163-66. These particular concepts, as well as her overall contribution to the understanding of ethical action in relation to moral responsibility, will be more fully expounded later in the dissertation.

humankind's capacity to be "hearers of the word" (Rahner), is what constitutes the checkered history of humanity's reception of the love of God. The human striving recorded in the pageant of biblical history has provided the basis for centuries of theological reflection on just what it means for human beings to sin and what the implication is for each one of us individually when we stumble in our fidelity to God.

The human motivations for sin appear to be as varied as the number and kinds of sins on display in the section of the Hebrew Bible referred to as Primeval History (Gn 2-11), a virtual catalogue of individual and corporate sinning. This earliest biblical account of the human story moves inexorably through the Fall of Adam, the sin of Cain, the Great Flood, and ends with the Tower of Babel. The disobedience in the Garden of Eden causes both alienation from God and disorder in the world, the latter exemplified most dramatically, perhaps, by the confusion of languages which thwarts the building of the Tower of Babel and results in the scattering of humanity. And so it is that these deeds of our earliest ancestors, these primal sins, become the first recorded disclosures of the human "mystery of sin."

Arguably though, these woeful actions are comprehended most readily as sinful not just as actions in and of themselves, but because they constitute a rupture of *relationship* between a people and their God. Fortunately for us, human maltreatment of God's love ultimately does not prevail: the Hebrew notion of sin also extends to its opposite, the restoration of the damaged relationship through the unbounded and gratuitous love of Yahweh. The Christian understanding of sin builds on the foundation established by the Jewish people and interprets a similar dynamic of relationality and forgiveness, one brought

even closer by the advent of the person of Jesus Christ and expressed in his relationship to the Father and the Spirit. Throughout the Bible and the theologies derived from scripture, it has always been the exercise of human freedom in the context of the law and love of God that provides the nexus for an evolving understanding of sin.

One of the seminal developments in Roman Catholic theology since the Second Vatican Council has been an expanding comprehension of the reality of social sin and a broadening use of the term in ecclesial discourse. What began in magisterial teaching as a modest acknowledgment of "the social consequences of sin" (*Sacrosanctum concilium* §109, 1963) and an understanding that people are "often turned away from the good and urged to evil by the social environment" (*Gaudium et spes* §25, 1965), grew—largely in response to the post-Vatican II novel formulations of liberation theology emanating from Latin America—into a greater realization of the enduring presence and influence of sin manifested in the configurations of society. In her extensive review of magisterial literature, Margaret Pfeil has found that by the time of *Centesimus annus* (1991) the term "social sin" had become widely accepted by the ordinary magisterium and was used every year thereafter (and with increasing frequency) by Pope John Paul II in his writings and speeches.[5]

The declaration in *Gaudium et spes* (§4) that "at all times the Church carries the responsibility of reading the signs of the time and interpreting them in the light of the Gospel," was taken up by the Latin American bishops at the CELAM episcopal conferences

---

[5]Margaret R. Pfeil, "Toward an Understanding of the Language of Social Sin in Magisterial Teaching" (Ph.D. diss., Notre Dame University, 2000).

in Medellín, Colombia (1968) and Puebla, Mexico (1979). They identified the systemic poverty around them as a "situation of sin" and called for a "preferential option for the poor" as necessary for both personal and ecclesial conversion. The Roman magisterium, aware of the published conclusions of the CELAM documents and the developments in liberation theology, responded to the challenges they presented. The writings of John Paul II reflect papal magisterial teaching in taking cognizance of the "new" reality of social sin while still preserving the primacy of individual moral agency as traditionally understood: "To speak even analogically of social sins must not cause us to underestimate the responsibility of the individuals involved" (*Reconciliatio et paenitentia* §16).

While these different sources have contributed to Catholic discourse on the ethical dimensions of modern social ills, the problem of how best to comprehend moral agency in the context of social sin has resisted easy solution; questions persist related to the limits of personal freedom, plural agency in the context of social action, and the mitigating factors of cultural ideologies and the "false consciousness" they produce—to name only a few. In particular, the matters of *accountability* for the establishment and perpetuation of social sin and the contours of *moral responsibility* in rectifying the structural manifestations of sin have been difficult to resolve satisfactorily. By definition social sin operates beyond the control of any one individual; yet, the "situation of sin" so clearly in evidence can not be easily finessed away, even in the absence of clearly identified moral agents. The call of liberation theology to understand the structural arrangements of society perpetuating poverty as social evils does not, in and by itself, establish clear parameters for personal and collective accountability for the "situation of sin" in the first place. It has been difficult, too,

to determine exactly how modern formulations of moral agency ought to deal with the blinding effects of social sin embedded in the culture and its values. Lastly, the limits of individual and communal responsibility for remedying social sin, especially poverty, have also proved difficult to parse.

While both magisterial teaching and theological reflection have illuminated pertinent subject areas in moral agency and social sin, there would appear to be still some lacunae in a full presentation of the interrelationship between these two notions. The documents from the episcopal and papal magisteria selected for analysis in this paper were chosen as good-faith ecclesial attempts to engage these difficult issues and close some of these loopholes.[6]

---

[6]A note on the use of term *magisteria* in this dissertation is in order here. The concept of the teaching function (*magisterium*) which belongs to the church has a long history. The Latin word *magister* (a "greater person" in charge of anything, as contrasted with a *minister* or "lesser person") became associated more narrowly with teaching only in the middle ages with the rise of theological schools and universities in Europe. It was Pius XII who began the custom of capitalizing the word *magisterium* as in his terminological references, such as the "living *Magisterium*" and "this sacred *Magisterium*." The Second Vatican Council invoked the triple ministry of "priest, prophet, and king" (*ministerium*, *magisterium*, *regimen*) as the principle metaphor for defining the various *munera* of the episcopate: sanctifying, teaching, and governing. [The Latin term *munera* is best translated in an active sense, as "services" or "duties"—not, as it is often rendered—"offices" which comes across as rather static, even bureaucratic. This very point about the teaching *munus* of the church is emphasized by the Fathers of Vatican II who note that it "is, in the strict sense of the term, a service, which is called very expressively in sacred scripture a *diakonia* or ministry" (*Lumen gentium* §24, 378).] Even more importantly, the Conciliar bishops teach that all of the baptized also share in teaching the truth of God's Word: "The faithful who by Baptism are incorporated into Christ . . . in their own way share the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ" (*Lumen gentium* §31, 388). It is in this expanded sense of the teaching office as belonging to the entire church that Joseph Komonchak writes: "The faith resides first and primarily in the whole community of faith, which as a whole is the principal bearer of the Gospel" [Joseph A. Komonchak, "Review," *The Jurist* 42:2 (1982), 567]. In regard to magisterial teaching, it is the Christian spirit of communion which should inform the passing on of the faith (*paradosis*), rather than the more frequently voiced contentious issues of primacy and authority. It is out of that spirit of *communio* that one can say there is but a single "magisterium" shared by all who are united in Christ. The

The degree to which these texts succeed in establishing a wholly coherent Catholic theory of moral agency in relation to social sin lies at the center of this thesis.

Although the first chapter should in no way be construed as a "history of sin," the dissertation does begin with a chronological review of some of the core principles, religious traditions, and theological suppositions on the nature and reality of sin. With those data in place, the second half of the first chapter looks at the background behind and provenance of relatively recent magisterial reflections on the issue, particularly in relation to social sin. Two key sets of post-Vatican II sources are to be investigated in detail: synodal documents of the Latin American bishops (produced at the conclusion of the CELAM conferences at Medellín in 1968 and at Puebla in 1979), and selected texts, mostly encyclicals, from the teaching of Pope John Paul II—all of which documents pertain directly to the core ideas under investigation.

To understand the relationship between moral agency and social sin, the second chapter, like the first, begins with a historical perspective on some of the main issues regarding moral agency as articulated in the Catholic theological tradition. In order to take into account not only basic tenets of moral theology but also modern views of moral theory, a heuristic framework comprising five questions is established in the second part of the chapter to help reveal how the various selected texts do in fact explicate moral agency and ethical responsibility in relation to the broad dynamic of social sin. In chapter three, the selected magisterial documents are examined in detail and with attention paid to their

---

use of the plural word *magisteria* in this dissertation is simply a matter of convenience: it is employed when referring in common to the magisterial teaching of the Latin American episcopate and that of the pope in Rome.

response to each of the five questions posed. One of the key points to be revealed in the textual analyses provided there (which are more than just summaries) is the degree to which the magisteria successfully reckon with modern notions emanating from the social sciences—ideas which both bishops and pope recognize as true "signs of the time" and all acknowledge as critical to the discussion. Then in chapter four, a synthesis addressing comparability is construed: in what respects do the documents concur with one another, where do their positions diverge, and to what degree are the texts themselves internally consistent in relation to the five heuristic questions. In light of that synthesis, the dissertation concludes with a shorter chapter highlighting some additional areas of theological reflection related to the topic of sin which may be of use in future efforts to provide a coherent Catholic accounting of ethical demands in relation to social sin.

It is beyond the scope of this dissertation (and the writer) to offer a complete accounting of how *best* to understand moral agency in relation to social sin. The philosophical and religious perspectives that will have been presented along the way should, however, at least sharpen future discussion of the identified issues and topics. As such, even if ultimately unresolved, the points of argument taken up can contribute to an evolving comprehension of moral agency in the Catholic theological tradition.

CHAPTER ONE

SIN

For God formed man to be imperishable; the image of his own nature he made him. But by the envy of the devil, death entered the world, and they who are in his possession experience it.

Book of Wisdom, 2:23-4

Historical Perspective

The broad topic "sin"—variously referred to as the problem of / the mystery of / the reality of sin—is in some ways like the weather: people talk about it with a casualness which suggests real understanding, but at the same time they operate as if helpless to do much of anything about it. In order to move beyond this perplexing state of affairs, it would prove useful to begin with a recapitulation of what has come down to us from the tradition regarding sin.[1] Even the historical perspective on sin given below, which is not a history of sin, does not yield up a facile synthesis of all the ideas identified in it along the way. The more data taken into consideration, the more multifaceted the subject of sin becomes. A more fruitful approach, and the one taken here, is to proceed by looking at sin as not *one*

---

[1]Some classic texts used for historical background in this dissertation include: Louis Monden, S.J., *Sin, Liberty and Law* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1965); Piet Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin: A Theological View* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1965); Bernard Häring, *Sin in the Secular Age* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974); Gaffney, *Sin Reconsidered*; and Hugh Connolly, *Sin* (London: Continuum, 2002).

thing, *one* phenomenon, but rather as a complex of notions which taken together help delineate, if not exactly explain, the long and troubled relationship between Creator and creation.

Sin is often characterized along two broad perspectives, external and internal. From an extrinsic point of view, sin is object-centered: the nature and circumstances of the act are critical. In this case, moral thinking tends to be legalistic and the focus is on obedience to specified norms; in such an external scheme, "sin" becomes *sins*. An intrinsic point of view is person-centered: critical considerations revolve around accountability and responsibility, matters relating more to the person than to the action. In an internal scheme, virtue becomes the focus in overcoming the reality of sin which is seen personalistically in relation to one's appropriation of God's free gift of grace—"sin" becomes *sinfulness*. In the case of social sin, the location, so to speak, of the problem of the evil is already well defined: the "place" of social sin is "out there," embedded in the social matrix. The rub of social sin's interface with moral agency, then, is not so much a matter of locus, but rather the manner of its operationalization. How, basically, can sin be understood to function socially? Or better, what are the several *ways* by which we can describe how sin operates, both for the individual and for the community which supports it?

While there is no one accepted taxonomy for describing sin, in this thesis sin will be understood to operate variously in four different modes. Though distinct in themselves, these four aspects of sin coalesce, with each element also containing some facet of the others. The four ways of considering sin are: (1) sin as transgression of law (*sin of commission*), (2) sin as failure to uphold the love of God through the withholding of ethical

action (*sin of omission*), (3) sin as a breach in divine and human relationships (*sin of failing to love*), and (4) sin as rejection of God (*sin of refusing God's grace*). Although each aspect of sin is interrelated with another, each one calls for a differently nuanced interface with moral agency. It is out of this ongoing struggle to comprehend the nature of sin that the selected magisterial documents (catalogued in the second section of this chapter and investigated in greater depth later in the paper), along with other voices from outside the magisterium (brought into the discussion in the last chapter of the dissertation), have brought forth new—though still incomplete—construals of the human capacity to overcome sin with the help of God's grace.

Biblical Background and the Early Christian Tradition

The Hebrew Scriptures

An important dimension of the Old Testament concept of sin, one which encompasses all four of the aspects of sinfulness mentioned above, is found in the core principle of covenant. Like the ancient vassal-suzerain treaties which established relationship between a weak and vulnerable human community and a powerful ruler, Israel developed—out of its own experience of the exodus and the law given Moses—an understanding of a bilateral arrangement existing between God and the people of God: "I

will take you as my people, and I will be your God" (Ex 6:7a).[2] It is an unequal relationship to be sure: the all-powerful Yahweh condescends to protect and impose regulations which the dependent Israel is then obligated to follow, as would vassals and loyal subjects; there can be no other alliances or any mixed loyalties.[3] Thus, actions and failures of action, commissions and omissions—the first two modes of sin—which violate the stipulations of the covenantal contract are readily deemed evil in the Hebrew tradition.

But it would be wrong to interpret covenant and the Old Testament concept of sin solely in legalistic terms. Although the conditions of *torah*, the way of life according to God's law incorporated by Israel into its self-identity, contain both casuistic ("if . . . then") and apodictic ("thou shalt not . . . ") religious laws, ultimately, the divine-human connection is one based not on power and the law, but rather on love and intimate relationship. Actions which countervene the law and love of God are sins because spiritually, as it were, they violate the bond of love which undergirds covenantal law, as well as the promise of enduring relationship and support offered by Yahweh. Legalism, sin merely as rule-

---

[2]Rolf Rendtorff finds the covenant formula occurring more than thirty times in various expressions in the Hebrew Bible and distinguishes three versions of the basic formula: A~ "I will be God for you" (which appears almost exclusively only in the first four books of the Pentateuch), B~ "You shall be a people for me" (most commonly found in Deuteronomy), and C~ the two combined into a single formula, "I will be your God and you shall be my people" (found twice in the Priestly Pentateuch and twice in Deuteronomy, but more commonly in the prophetic writings, chiefly Jeremiah and Ezekiel). See Rolf Rendtorff, *The Covenant Formula: An Exegetical and Theological Investigation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, Ltd., 1998).

[3]The establishment of covenant is ultimately a matter of Yahweh's choice and a manifestation of divine power and prerogative. Although in the Old Testament human "reasons" are sometimes put in to explain the dictates emanating from God, in the end, it is the mysterious and mighty will of the Lord that is the ultimate cause and rationale for the covenantal relationship.

breaking, results when concern for the law becomes detached from concern about the

relationship established by covenant "from which the law [in fact] derives its meaning and

value."[4] Sin, then, breaks not only the law of God but the trust which exists in a covenantal

relationship: "Sin becomes, in its most essential meaning, infidelity. And infidelity becomes

. . . both supreme ingratitude and supreme folly."[5] The third aspect of sin, then, is revealed

as a failure to love God; this dereliction in returning Yahweh's unbounded love—no matter

how inadequate humankind's capacity for reciprocity may in fact be—is held as sinful. The

troubled human/divine relationship marked by Israel's hardness of heart and Yahweh's

consequent disappointment is accented in the Hebrew testament by the presentation of an

anthropomorphized God who is always "let down" by the actions and omissions on the part

of Israel: "This people's heart goes astray; they do not know my ways . . . They shall never

enter my rest" (Ps 95:10, 11).[6]

---

[4]Gaffney, *Sin Reconsidered*, 27. This separation of sin from relationality and the elevation of a disembodied code of law-breaking as expressing the full parameters of sinfulness were to be hallmarks of certain eras in the Christian understanding of sin as well.

[5]Ibid., 25. The prophets, typified by the Book of Hosea, often characterized Israel's infidelity employing the analogies of marriage and adultery (cf. Psalm 106:39: "They defiled themselves by their actions, became adulterers by their conduct"). The same core idea of affective faithfulness is expressed by other Hebrew writers and psalmists when they speak frequently and movingly in terms of an "I-Thou" relationship with the Lord. In this regard, Yahweh explains (through Moses in Dt 7:8) the favor of God remembering the covenant thus: "It was because the Lord loved you."

[6]Abraham Joshua Heschel characterizes this emotionally involved Yahweh as a "pathetic God." See his perceptive work, *God in Search of Man: A Philosophy of Judaism* (New York, NY: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1956).

"Promise" is perhaps the most apt term to characterize the nature of the covenantal relationship between Yahweh and the people of Israel.[7] As an initiative on God's part, divine promise has an autonomy that does not depend upon Israel's faithfulness, although it does not release the people from the obligation to maintain fidelity to Yahweh, nor does it exculpate the nation when it fails to do so. Most critically, God's faithful promise is never withdrawn (Ps 89:30-38). From the primacy accorded this promissory aspect of covenant develops a theology of grace: it is out of Yahweh's offer, which comes first and is unconditional, that a grace of election originates. Notably, faithfulness to covenant does not *earn* oneself a special closeness to God—that grace is antecedent and gratuitous.[8] Furthermore, the free grace inherent in covenant entails an ongoing gift of the grace necessary to maintain fidelity; grace is offered preconditionally for obeying the law, in other words, rather than coming as a reward earned through obedience to the law.[9] To refuse this grace from the good God is to choose evil, and it is this rejection that constitutes the fourth mode of sinning.

Lastly, and most importantly as regards social sin, sin also disrupts the social coherence of the people called forth (*qahal*) who are bonded to the Lord: the breach in the

---

[7]Paradigmatically, the messianic promises of Isaiah (which augur a splendid successor to David) establish a pledge of salvation through David's line, an extension of God's promise of love and eternal favor which is interpreted later in the Christian era as realized in Jesus (cf. Ps 132).

[8]It is, of course, a gift, not coercion. God "persuades" humankind to accept the special relationship offered: loyalty and justice are demanded, but the liberty of the people to accept or reject God's offer (that is, to sin) is also there.

[9]This same concept, taken up in the Christian era, was to evoke the proliferation of a number of different terms including: operative grace, prevenient grace, sanctifying grace, created and uncreated grace, actual grace, cooperative grace, and habitual grace.

divine/human relationship which sin causes results in the twin betrayal of both God and

neighbor.[10] With sinning comes the community's need to restore the break in relations

between Creator and created. As Israel develops a communal sense of sin as willful damage

to its relationship with Yahweh, a priestly class arises to expiate the sinfulness of the people

through atoning sacrifice.[11] In ancient Israel the return to God is enacted cultically through

a renewal of the covenantal agreement; with this return to right-relationship, divine-human

intimacy is restored.[12] This reconciliation has both an individual aspect vis-à-vis God and a

social dimension vis-à-vis the community, neither of which can ever be fully separated out

from the other: Israel is its people, and the people of Israel, identified corporately, form a

whole and share a single destiny. These same contours in the social dimension of sin will be

found applicable to the People of God as ideas in hamartiology are developed at and after

the Second Vatican Council.

The Christian Tradition

---

[10]The antidote to sin—twofold love of God and neighbor—is, of course, also one of the foundational maxims of the New Testament. Thus in both testaments it can be said, as Gaffney does, that "there is no legitimate distinction between anti-social behavior and irreligious behavior"; Gaffney, *Sin Reconsidered*, 25. The rupture in social comity caused by sin becomes an important point of focus in the discussion of social sin after the Second Vatican Council, as will be shown later.

[11]An interesting development in this regard is the notion of the "scapegoat," an animal onto which the iniquities of the people are transferred in their confession of sin; the live goat with its assumed burden of sin is then led out to the wilderness: Lv 16:21-2.

[12]It is important to remember that while cultic rites were understood to restore the rupture caused by disobedience to Yahweh's *torah*, they were never seen as separate from the associate need to establish an interior holiness also required by God: "Be holy, for I the Lord, your God, am holy" (Ex 19:6; Is 1:10-8).

The four modes of sin identified above in the Old Testament are also found in the New Testament, although with some novel distinctions. Jesus extends the covenant between Yahweh and Israel and the promise of God's faithfulness in a unique way. His "table fellowship" with women, foreigners, sinners, and the like, defies the conventions of accepted morality and appears to countermand the law of Moses. Rather than measuring guilt by the external material act, Jesus teaches that sin is ultimately a quality of the person, a predisposition of the inner self which then informs the act: "A good person out of the store of goodness in his heart produces good" (Lk 6:45a).[13] With conversion and right intention—that is, love—having replaced obedience to strict codes of the law, Jesus' ethical teaching extends now to sins of omission and unfruitfulness: the barren fig tree, the burying of the talents, those who ignore the poor and suffering (Dives in the parable of Lazarus at the Gate, and the Levite in the parable of the Good Samaritan), as well as all those who fail in the humblest acts of charity (the goats are separated from the sheep at the Judgment of the Nations in Mt 25:31-46 for overlooking the needs of the Son of Man's "least brothers"). The neglect of love for others ultimately becomes sin against the love of God.[14]

---

[13]Thus, out of the cultivation of virtue comes moral excellence. Cf. the *antitheses* in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5) wherein the interior predispositions which lead to sinning—anger, lust, etc.—are themselves deemed sinful. So also, it is an inner change of heart that brings the prodigal son to repentance and allows for the forgiveness of his sin (Lk 15).

[14]This notion is taken one step further in Jesus' teaching (Mt 12:31-2) that whoever denies the Holy Spirit of God commits the unpardonable sin which "will not be forgiven," providing a scriptural basis for the later complex and often controverted discussion of what constitutes mortal sin, the definitive break from the grace of God.

The gospel of John speaks of sin in the singular—the "sin of the world"[15]—and connects it with the power of darkness and the "ruler of this world [i.e., the devil]" (Jn 12:31, 36). In counterpoint, it is the singular Christ, the Word of God, who is the "true light" (Jn 1:9) that overcomes this darkness of sin. And again, in contradistinction to the one sinner, Adam (Rom 5:12-19), Jesus, in his singularity of person, is "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29). Thus in this configuration, every sin and all sins are broadly subsumed under "sin" itself, the remedy of which can only be through the salvation which comes from faith in the unique Son of God.

In the first few centuries after the Christ event, the subject of sin and its remission absorbed the Christian community in much the same way as did christological questions. Paul would seem to have had two minds on the subject: on the one hand, prescribing separation from the community for serious sin (1 Cor 5:2), and then on the other hand, urging forgiveness and reacceptance into the community to put an end to the rupture (2 Cor 2:7-8).[16] The *Didache* and the Shepherd of Hermas contain the earliest catalogues of sin (outside the deutero-Pauline texts), understood in the early church chiefly in terms of acts of commission; both of these writings stress the confession of sins[17] and the performance of

---

[15]The "sin of the world" complements the myth of Adam and Eve by emphasizing the fact that we are born into a fallen world of sin which consequently induces us to realize further sin; the process is not just serial, but dynamic: that is, to Adam's sin is now added the burden of all subsequent sinning. This notion also provides a basis for the concept of original sin which was to develop later.

[16]Thus was laid the groundwork for the early church's public process of penance: excommunication, confession, penitence, and readmission to eucharist.

[17]"Before you celebrate the Eucharist confess your sins that your sacrifice may be pure" (*Didache* 4, in *The Fathers of the Church*, Vol 1, ed. H. Dressler CUA Press, 167-86); quoted in Connolly, *Sin*, 42.

penance for the reparation of sins. During the Patristic era, the Greek Fathers of the

church, the so-called Apologists, developed a sort of rudimentary "applied moral theology,"

listing not only specific sins to be avoided, but also certain professions as prohibitive of the

Christian life and therefore requiring renunciation. At issue was not simply proscription of

particular forms of social conduct, acts transgressing the law of God, but rather, an effort to

disclose and understand the underlying motivations for and roots of sin. Vocations, such as

being a soldier,[18] were thought to obscure *theōría* (θεωρία), the contemplation of or

insight into God, and so also disrupt *parrēsía* (παρρησία), the natural openness and free

flow of grace thought to characterize right relationship between human beings and God.[19]

Way-of-life and habit formation as a prelude to, or the "occasion" of, sinning were to

continue to be subjects of Christian concern and moral theology going forward.

In the mid-to-late fourth century, the Cappadocians (Basil the Great, Gregory of

Nyssa, and Gregory of Nazianzus) taught that the re-creation of humanity through

grace—becoming "like God" (divinization)[20]—was not only within human possibility, but

was, in fact, God's original plan for creation. The concept of deification was built on the

---

[18]Right up to St. Ignatius of Loyola (sixteenth century), it was common practice for those who sought to embrace the way of holiness to first forsake the military life.

[19]Ibid., 46. This rupture of *parrēsía* is "second-hand" sin-as-rejection-of-God, as it were: the person does not make a conscious intention to refuse God's grace, but ends up doing just that as an ineluctable consequence of the choices of action and ways of living that of themselves impose impediments to the reception of God's grace.

[20]The scriptural basis for this notion comes from 2 Pt 1:4, "So that through them [the knowledge and promises of God] you may come to share in the divine nature" (cf. 2 Cor 5:21: "For our sake he made him to be sin who did not know sin, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him"). It is always important to remember that deification delineates solidarity and communion, not equality, with God.

teaching of Irenaeus who had posited that Adam, created in the image of God (Gn 1:26-27),

was the prototype of what all humanity is destined to be: the perfect likeness of the Father;

the Fall curtailed what would have been humankind's spiritual development toward

perfection. Only through Jesus who is, in fact, the perfect likeness of the Father, is

humanity able to achieve redemption and the fulfillment of what was in God's plan all

along.[21] This exalted belief in the nature and potential of the human creature establishes for

humankind the project of *developing* holiness and *growing* in right action. The notion that

the outpouring of God's spirit opens up to us a process for ever-evolving spiritual

progression later comes to inform the concept of "virtue theory."

The emergence of predispositions as critical in leading a person toward sin (or away

from it) was foundational for the Latin Fathers in the Patristic era as well, most especially

Augustine. While still maintaining a juridical focus on transgression of divine law

("anything said, done or desired contrary to the eternal law"), Augustine adds an intriguing

psychological dimension when he also defines sin as "a turning away from God and a

turning toward the creature [*aversio a Dio, conversio ad creaturam*]."[22] For Augustine

there exists a dualism in human nature, a constant (usually futile) struggle with the

enticement of sin, a problem of human affect which goes beyond mere rational—often

---

[21]The Son of God "reestablishes the likeness of God [*imago dei*] in that humanity of which he has become part," Gaffney, *Sin Reconsidered*, 51.

[22]In Augustinian thinking, "eternal law" is taken to be the expression of divine reason. Both quotes, from *Contra Faustum* 22 and *De Libero Arbitrio* 2, respectively, are cited in Connolly, *Sin*, 48-49. This latter phrase used by Augustine might have been derived from St. Paul's Letter to the Romans (1:25): "They [the wicked] exchanged the truth of God for a lie and revered and worshiped the creature rather than the creator."

misguided—decision-making. In the Old Testament, temptation, for example Israel's forty

years of wandering in the desert, functioned more as an ordeal or test of fidelity.[23]

Augustine postulates temptation or the inclination to sin *within*: as concupiscence,

undisciplined human desire arising from pride, curiosity, carnality, and the like.[24] The

Bishop of Hippo later molds this perverse, inner tendency toward evil into the concept of

"original sin," a legacy of the Fall, thereby giving reason, though not excuse, for sinning.[25]

Original sin contributes the idea of the persistence of evilness through generations, a

concept that is consonant with modern-day social science analysis of human problems and

societal ills.[26]

    This review of our inherited understanding of the nature of sin, derived from the

Judeo-Christian tradition presented here, provides the background for moving forward to

---

[23]God, "disappointed" in the Hebrew people who have been brought out of Egypt by divine intervention and power, allows temptations so that Israel might learn the ways of Yahweh and achieve moral growth. God teaches virtue through the sometimes painful acquisition of self-knowledge: in this sense, the experience of difficulties, in particular temptation, "is thought of as furnishing knowledge not to God, who does not need it, but to human beings who do," Gaffney, *Sin Reconsidered*, 31-2.

[24]Cf. the Lord's admonition to Cain: "Sin is a demon lurking at the door: his urge is toward you, yet you can be his master" (Gn 4:7).

[25]In the pledge to renew creation despite humanity's sinfulness, the "world-weary" Lord admits to Noah the sad truth that "the desires of man's heart are evil from the start" (Gn 8:21).

[26]Ideas such as the "family-systems" perspective and the psychological role of the unconscious in limiting human freedom have roiled the waters of how best to estimate culpability in relation to what is meet as sacramental penance for actual sin. The degree to which the social context negatively impacts conscience formation is controversial, and an overemphasis on the influence of milieu has been critiqued by the Roman magisterium. Still, few would argue that the social construction of the child (in particular) occurs both unwittingly and—from the perspective of the child—unwillingly, thereby casting long shadows on the development of his or her capacity for moral rectitude.

the next topic: a review of the history of the sacrament of penance. The four modes of sin

established at the beginning of this chapter, variously and together, are reflected in the long

history of how the church has dealt with the phenomenon of sinning. Whether construed as

willful transgression of the law, or weakness to uphold the love of God through inaction, or

failure to love God and neighbor, or humankind's refusal of God's grace, the remedy for the

rupture caused by sin—but vanquished by Christ—can only be secured by rechanneling the

grace of God directly to a sinful humanity. It is through sacrament that humankind is able

to obtain restoration of broken relationships and receive the spur in virtuousness necessary

to avoid further sinning.

Penance

The long and convoluted history of the sacrament of penance reflects an evolving

comprehension of sin in the tradition. The rites developed for the remission of sin

essentially reflected all four of the modes of sin outlined above, although one aspect might

be emphasized over another depending upon the historical age. Baptism into the Body of

Christ, the church, was the primordial means of exorcizing the dominion of sin over the

person, and its chief effect, overcoming original sin, was irreversible. Yet, it could not be

denied that there was also ongoing sinning in the community even after baptism. As a result

of this lamentable reality, liturgical mechanisms were developed to restore errant Christians

back to the community of the church.

While a detailed recapitulation of the early development of penance is beyond the scope of this thesis,[27] it is important to note that the church's rite has always involved four components: confession (*exomologesis*), contrition (repentance), penance, and reconciliation (or absolution). As in the Hebrew convenantal tradition, the drawing of humankind back into the love of God derives ultimately from divine initiative: in the Christian context this restoration of right relationship begins with the call to repentance in the ministry of Jesus and ends with the reconciliation achieved through his crucifixion and resurrection. Although the ritual mechanics for overcoming the separation of sin have evolved in the church over time, the core responsibility of the penitent in this process—namely conversion—has remained constant.[28]

In the very beginning it was the local bishop who directed the reconciliation process, though always in full recognition that it was God alone who pardoned. Initially, the conditions for the penitents were very austere: the so-called *rigorist* position of Tertullian (d. 220) permitted forgiveness and reconciliation after baptism only once in a lifetime. Cyprian allowed the laying on of hands, along with a prayer as the sign of reconciliation, for repenting baptized Christians in danger of dying. Most other penitents, though, had to undergo long penances of exclusion from the community of the church; those who had

---

[27]For a comprehensive treatment of the history of the sacrament of forgiveness, see James Dallen, *The Reconciling Community: The Rite of Penance* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1986).

[28]Dallen points out elsewhere, though, that the type of habilitation constituting true penance changed over time: with the rise of individual confession after the Patristic age, "conversion was no longer a matter of being transformed into community but of individuals changing their [personal] behavior," James Dallen, "Reconciliation in the Sacrament of Penance," *Worship* 64 (1990), 392.

sinned were additionally marked by having to wear an identifying coarse garment. The end-result of these rigorous practices of public disgrace was often only to encourage catechumens to delay their initial baptism until the last possible moment—even to waiting until they were on their deathbeds. Eventually, these strict penitential practices had to be abandoned.

Because penance served as a "second baptism," the most common model of reentry into the community for a sinner who had been expelled from receiving eucharist[29] was a reenactment of the catechumen's progression of entry into the community before baptism: the penitent might first spend time outside of the church in public penance, then be admitted inside—but just to hear the word of God, and only lastly be allowed to participate in the eucharistic celebration. As it was the sense of *communio*[30] which had been ruptured by sin,

---

[29]Such draconian measures were likely instituted only in cases of the most serious of sins: murder, apostasy, *porneia*, and the like (the history is mixed). The regular celebration of eucharist was the usual means of reconciling the sinner in cases of less serious transgressions; and everyday sins could be forgiven by saying the Our Father, doing good works, and almsgiving. Augustine himself distinguished between sins *ad mortem*, which definitively broke the bond of communion, and more pardonable errors, the *veniabiliora*.

[30]*Communio* (Gr. *koinonia*) implies shared relationality and friendship, and its breach highlights sin as rupture of divine/human connectedness. Our vertical relationship, our participation in the life of the triune God, establishes the basis for our horizontal communion with all of the baptized (the church who are held together by the common experience of eucharist). Even though we are related to God individually, it is the communal life effected by incorporation into the Body of Christ that establishes a bond of kinship among all believers. *Koinonia* is the foundation of the idea that the sin of the individual actually harms the whole community: there can be no innocence in a church having an errant individual in its midst since, by extension, it is the group which actually then holds the sin. That is why it is only when a sinner is fully reconciled to God that the individual is able once again to share in the one meal of the Body of Christ. *Communio* fosters recognition of the importance of interpersonal relations in the life of the church and counterbalances some of the juridical and doctrinal emphases in sin.

it was the community of believers who actually exercised the rite of return. Reconciliation was fully achieved when the sinner shared in the mystery of Christ—highlighted by participation once again in eucharist—as part of the community. Although the presbyter might have a particular role to play at various steps of reentry in the order of penitents, it was the church as a whole which actually performed the sacramental process of forgiveness. This communal aspect to both sin and reconciliation which is found in the early tradition was revived in the renewal of the sacrament of penance after the Second Vatican Council, although its full flourishing would appear to have become diminished in the years since.

In the sixth century in Ireland, a new form of penitential practice was developed, one which could be accessed by the sinner through private confession and, most importantly, more than once.[31] To help in the administration of this new form of penance, handbooks (the so-called "Penitentials") were developed for priests which created a taxonomy of various sins along with their proper penances. Though harsh by modern standards, the penances were considered less severe than the rigorist prescriptions of before. The tariffs of penance given (commonly, mortifications such as fasting and pilgrimages) were meant to be therapeutic rather than vindictive, often imposing the exercise of a virtue contrary to the sin confessed in order to "cure the soul" of its sinfulness.

Although use of the Penitentials may appear rote and mechanical, the practice of auricular confession actually brought to the minister of the sacrament the novel role of

---

[31]In this next section I am indebted to the useful summary developed in Connolly, *Sin*, 51-60.

having to interpret particular presenting information in order to make modifications to the prescribed penance. For example, the penances given were graduated according to the seriousness of the sin: thus, *reasonability* entered into the consideration of moral transgression. With human interpretation now part of the determination of sinfulness, the clerics' role in taking into account personal and mitigating factors increased in importance: whether it was a sin of thought or a sin of deed; the age, learning and health of the sinner, and whether he was a layperson or monk; the force of pressure and/or the habitual nature of the sin, etc. Although with the Penitentials the overall approach was still highly juridical, nuancing the conditions of the sin and the situation of the sinner did push the understanding of sin beyond mere transgression of the law. That said, the focus on sinning in medieval penance was nevertheless still highly individualistic: moral behavior was considered the responsibility of the person *apart* from the community. Narrow concern alone for the proper cataloguing of sins suppressed any need for a clerical role in the development of moral theology and also stymied the growth of moral responsibility on the part of the laity.

Foundationally, sin continued to be understood as alienation from God, who alone could save the sinner from the self-destruction of desire. Those restored to God through penitence were then expected to demonstrate their love in concrete deeds; penance was to operate as an exterior function of an inner contrition, thus supporting the growth of virtue. In practice, however, the focus in accounting human sinfulness in the early and late middle ages moved further away from general moral principles and toward more narrow consideration of the individual moral *act* in its concrete circumstances; this medieval "rigorism" resulted in a legalistic rather than dynamic understanding of sin. Also in this era,

the penances prescribed in the manuals became subject to ready quantification and external manipulation: the length of time, for example, could be shortened with indulgences or stipends paid to the priest for commuting the penance; other persons could even do the penance in place of the guilty party through payment of fees (a steady line of work for the less fortunate). This quantification of penance resulted in a conceptualization of repentance as a tariff-to-be-paid, a debt to be satisfied which more or less overshadowed any need for an interior conversion of the offender's heart as well. As the Irish monks established themselves across the continent, there developed new manuals, *Summae Confessorum*, which sought to refine the rules of behavior and sin still more precisely; with them, however, the "mystery of sin" became subject to even greater cut-and-dried classification.

In the scholastic era under the influence of Thomas Aquinas, a systematic and rational theology emerged which viewed sin as disorder: the result of the sway of emotions too strong and/or the will too weak.[32] In this configuration, sin is that which contravenes the ordering principle of grace which operates via human reason; as such it functions as rebellion against the Creator, akin to Adam's originating sin.[33] The Council of Trent regularized this highly rational (if abstract) understanding of sin and fixed a system for its

---

[32]In the later Protestant Reformation, attention also harkened back to the Augustinian understanding of sin as self-interestedness in the thrall of human passion, or (equally bad) prideful self-righteousness. Like Thomas, Luther held that human evil, a residue of original sin in the form of concupiscence, could be overcome only by complete transformation under God's grace—in Luther's case, though, salvation was effected through faith alone in Jesus Christ.

[33]Walter Farrell, *A Companion to the Summa*, vol. 1, part 2 (New York, NY: Sheed & Ward, 1974), 271. This notion of the disorder of sin aligns with the fourth mode sin presented above: sin as the refusing of God's grace.

removal: the rules of confession developed at the Council were later codified under canon law; the Council also institutionalized the need for annual confession, especially during Lent. In step with these magisterial decrees, the catechism outlined parameters for the seriousness of various sins along highly juridical lines. Perhaps most importantly, the Council of Trent also established the confession of mortal sins "according to their number and species," thereby ushering in the rigor of a personal examination of conscience as a necessary prelude to penance: the actual voicing of particular sins, confession, largely constituted the sole role for the penitent during the sacramental process and became its common descriptive name.

The scholastic emphasis on sin as transgression of law, coupled with the diligent analysis of the kinds and numbers of sin, even sins of thought, tended to freeze morality into moments and circumstances, ignoring longer-lasting and broader issues: the continuity of sinfulness over time, i.e., vice, and the possibility of widespread or systemic evil, i.e., issues of social morality. The focus of conversion was on reform of individuals in their particular actions rather than on any sense of how sinful acts might interrelate or how people together might act sinfully. In terms of the hamartiological constructs outlined earlier in this thesis, it is fair to say that the church in the middle ages promoted an individualistic understanding of sin as single actions and personal infractions of divine ordinances (sins of commission), while minimizing comprehension of sin as a failure through inaction to uphold fidelity to God in loving neighbor (sin of omission). Also overlooked was perception of any communal dimension to human evildoing: sin as a breakdown in divine and human social relationships (the sin of failing to love).

In the centuries after Trent, other manuals to aid priests in the administration of the sacrament codified—some might say, stultified—the exercise of penance. Private confession of individual acts according to a catalogue of sins prevailed as the norm for the sacrament of reconciliation right up to the time of the Second Vatican Council. After the Council there was instituted a major reform of the rite of penance,[34] one which reflected the modern understanding, actually recovered from the early tradition, of sin as a breach of community, both human and divine. It was judged that individual confession and individual contrition had overly focused the penitent on personal salvation from sins,[35] while absolution from the priest was taken to wash away the stain of sin in an all-too-concrete manner. Another critique was that the classical distinction established at the Council of Trent between venial sin ("transgression of God's law without 'complete commitment to the evil end' in comparatively unimportant matters or in important matters which were carried out with imperfect knowledge or imperfect consent") and mortal sin ("viewed as a 'decision in radical contradiction to God's will' . . . in an important matter"),

---

[34]James Thomas Cross suggests that the impetus for this updating derived from the legacy of "two challenges" set forth in the actual documents of Vatican II themselves: "First, the call for a shift away from the legalism and juridicism of the moral manuals and canon law and toward a more biblical and personalistic presentation of moral theology (OT 16; GS 3, 12), and second, the call for reforms in the rite and celebration of sacramental penance (SC 72, 109-10)." See James Thomas Cross, "Post-Conciliar Models of Sin and Reconciliation: Towards a Contemporary Paradigm" (Ph.D. diss., Duquesne University, 2003), 1.

[35]"The conviction grew that the inherited theology was too individualistic and subjective, focused on the forgiveness of the penitent's sins rather than on the penitent's being reunited with a merciful God," Dallen, "Reconciliation in the Sacrament of Penance," 395.

overemphasized the "gravity of the matter" to be found in any one, specific act.[36] More than the infraction of laws, sin in the modern era needed to reflect "missing the mark" of fully living out loving relationships, the call to discipleship vis-à vis God, and the call to communion vis-à vis neighbor. Reconciliation, too then, had to promote virtuous living and take into account the restoration of those relationships which had been broken by sin. After Vatican II the stage was firmly set for looking at sin and the effects of sin beyond the individual.

Modern Developments

Prior to the Second Vatican Council

In the modern era, there developed a theology of sin influenced more by neo-Thomistic virtue theory than by the legalistic casuistry of the manualists. Moral theology moved from a taxonomy of the confessional toward the notion of the development of an inner predisposition of charity based on the law of love encapsulated in the Great Commandment. With emphasis on the pull of discipleship and imitation of Christ, both understood as asymptotic goals, consideration of ethical action could range more easily into other modes of sinfulness: sin as omission and as the failure of love to respond to God's

---

[36]These definitions, based on the language of Trent, are taken from Karl-Heinz Peschke, *Christian Ethics: Moral Theology in the Light of Vatican II*, vol. 1 (Alcester, England: C. Goodliffe Neale Ltd., 1975), 300; quoted in Connolly, *Sin*, 75.

free offer of grace. With human behavior subject to scrutiny in terms of relationality once again, the stage was set to alter the landscape of the theology of sin in novel ways.

In the twentieth century, conscience became the *locus theologicus* for a new emphasis on the *development* of the moral person.[37] Moral behavior, still deemed vital to securing salvation, is seen more as the individual's response to heed God's call to love in action, viz., a morality of personalism. A direct connection is made, however, between one's relationship to God and one's kinship with neighbor, opening the door once again to considering sin in its "horizontal" or communal dimensions as well as in its "vertical,"

---

[37]Timothy O'Connell analyzes "conscience" (the Greek word found in the Bible is *syneidesis*) and identifies three interrelated aspects. First, conscience is taken to encompass the universal human characteristic of being aware of personal responsibility: an inner belief in the rightness or wrongness of human action which impels us to try to obtain the good (thus, providing the basis for that which we should *seek*). Conscience also refers, secondarily, to the search through reason for determining personal moral rightness, as in the term, "formation of conscience." This process is a fallible discernment of the truth, one which may admit of error (misunderstanding) or "blind spots" because of ignorance or sloth, as in sins of omission. Church teaching contributes positively to the success of this process but can not determine it, as it is the individual who is ultimately held accountable. Moral action based upon conscience represents a third and most important facet of the term: the degree of conformity to conscience of personal behavior which then determines, in large part, the sinfulness of particular deeds. Under conscience we are constrained to do the thing which we believe to be right thus, establishing how we should *act*. The institutional church provides a privileged source for understanding the relationship between our conscience and our actions because of its provision of sacramental support, long record of good deeds performed by the People of God, and nearness to, though not identity with, the Holy Spirit. And while the ordinary magisterium can point to and point out values consonant with the teachings of Jesus and the tradition of the church, it can not of itself take into full account the concrete, personal situations in which individuals make moral decisions. Historical circumstances, too, change such that the teachings in one age are not simply transferable to a new without some need of further clarification and/or additional nuance. In this sense O'Connell argues, magisterial moral teachings are fallible. See Timothy O'Connell, "Conscience," in *Principles for a Catholic Morality* (New York, NY: The Seabury Press, 1978), 83-97.

human-divine aspect.[38] Social relationships on both the individual and macro levels become

the arena wherein key components of virtue (justice, respect, tolerance, fraternity, etc.)

must be developed in discipleship and then incorporated into actions imitative of Christ.

Conscience comes to be understood, then, no longer as the exclusive province of the

individual, but rather as a communal actualization of moral behavior connected to an

ecclesial process of transformation held in common by the People of God, one in which

individual moral development expands outward to involve the whole church in its broad

interface with the world.[39]

Another modern innovation in hamartiology was actually a retrieval of the Pauline

concept of *kenosis*: God as the epitome of mercy, the One who exhibits a "love without

calculation."[40] The way in which salvation was attained by Christ, his emptying himself to

become the new creation, is meant to be our life project as well, what all of us are called to

achieve.[41] Compassing sinfulness, therefore, moves away from simply knowing what *not* to

---

[38]In the dynamic and interpersonal formulation of Bernard Häring, "Sin is a failure or refusal to grow . . . a refusal of responsibility and coresponsibility," Bernard Häring, *Sin in the Secular Age*, xii.

[39]In the Vatican II document "Declaration on Religious Liberty," the bishops of the Council affirm the capacity of all to come to know God's truth: "God has enabled man [*sic*] . . . to arrive at a deeper and deeper knowledge of unchangeable truth. For this reason everybody has the duty and consequently the right to seek the truth in religious matters so that, through the use of appropriate means, he may prudently form judgments of conscience which are sincere and true" (*Dignitatis humanae* §3, 801).

[40]The phrase is borrowed from the title of David Power's recent and thoughtful book: *Love Without Calculation: A Reflection on Divine Kenosis* (New York, NY: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2005).

[41]As Yahweh freed the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt, Jesus, too, frees humanity from slavery to sin. In Christian soteriology, however, salvation is accomplished not through an atoning sacrifice in ritual, but through unlimited self-offer, the *kenosis* of God in

do toward an evaluation of human action according to the new horizon of unlimited divine giving which, in turn, inspires human giving forth. Morality as vocation implies attending to both attitude, one's predisposition, as well as behavior, one's disposition. The interiorization of moral responsibility presupposes moral development such that ethical authenticity itself becomes a focus of consideration in the estimation of virtue and sinfulness. Choices of the heart which hamper moral progression can then be deemed sinful themselves for they block the flow of God's grace (the Patristic notion of *parrēsía*) which calls us, as free and responsible persons, to be united in the vocation of love: love which must be effected—according to the example of Christ—in service to the poor and marginalized. Thus the connection between internal attitude and external act is greatly strengthened when *kenosis* informs morality.

Around the time of Vatican II, and in the context of the development of existentialism, another new concept in the assessment of ethical behavior pushed further against the confines of the Tridentine understanding of sin. Human behavior, rather than being seen as serial, discontinuous moral or sinful acts, is taken as a whole and becomes an expression of moral character: a person's categorical choices reflecting one's basic *fundamental option* for or against God. Moral actions as expressions of our core human freedom reveal our values and commitments, and so, contribute (or not) to our personal salvation. Fundamental option posits that both venial and mortal sins are expressive of the basic predisposition of the sinner; as such, the gravity of any sinful act depends not so much on the material aspect, the object of the action itself, as it does on the degree to which it

---

the incarnation and on the cross.

turns a person from the path toward God.[42] While not denying the sinfulness of categorical

acts *per se*, fundamental option does stress the continuous aspect of human behavior and

the context in which the personal response to God's grace takes place over time.

According to this notion, atomizing one's moral choices into discrete actions runs the risk

of avoiding life's most basic project: the opportunity to "deepen one's existential dialogue

with Christ" through the process of ongoing conversion.[43]

At the Second Vatican Council

The various impulses outlined above for an updated theology of sin were gaining

traction even before the start of Vatican II; at the Council itself they coalesced around the

avant-garde formulation of the "church of the poor." This underreported historical

development at the Council in many respects provided the foundation for the concept of

social sin and its excogitation in liberation theology. A retrospective review of the

evolution of the "church of the poor group" and its lasting impact will provide important

keys to understanding the modern-day advances in hamartiology which have occurred since

the Second Vatican Council. As the Fathers at Vatican II struggled to redefine the nature

and function of the church, the persistent voice given the plight of the poor by certain

---

[42]The Greek word for "trespass" ($\pi\alpha\rho\acute{\alpha}\pi\tau\omega\mu\alpha$), signifying "sin" or "wrongdoing," means literally *slipping off the road* or *falling beside the path*.

[43]Connolly, *Sin*, 80.

bishops (the "church of the poor group") forced a broader ecclesial examination of conscience embracing a new call to conversion.

Exactly one month prior to the opening of the Second Vatican Council, in a radio address broadcast on 11 September 1962, Pope John XXIII invoked a theme which he hoped would be central to the work before the bishops. It was a stirring call to action, one which was to prove highly controversial: "Confronted with the underdeveloped countries, the Church presents itself as it is and wishes to be, as the Church of all, and particularly as the Church of the poor."[44] Three months after the pope's formal announcement of the Council, Cardinal Giacomo Lercaro would address the group of bishops who had, at the invitation of Cardinal Gerlier, been meeting at the Belgian College in Rome since October of that year (1962); under the inspiration of Fr. Paul Gauthier, and with Lercaro's tutelage, these bishops would come to be known as the "church of the poor group."[45] Particularly important for the later development of liberation theology, also resonating in this assembly

---

[44]"In faccia ai paesi sottosviluppati la Chiesa si presenta quale è, e vuol essere, come la Chiesa di tutti, e particolarmente la Chiesa dei poveri," Pope John XXIII, *Radio message to all the Christian faithful one month before the opening of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council (September 11, 1962)*; available from Vatican: the Holy See [Official Web Site of the Holy See], http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_xxiii/speeches/1962/documents/hf_j-xxiii_spe_19620911_ecumenical-council_it.html. The Council opened exactly one month later on 11 October 1962.

[45]This nascent group had developed out of the banned worker-priest movement in France and the community which was subsequently founded by Paul Gauthier in 1958 in Palestine (under the auspices of Msgr. Georges Hakim, Greek-Melkite Archbishop of Akka-Nazareth), *La Fraternité des Compagnons de Jésus Charpentier* [*The Brotherhood of the Companions of Jesus the Carpenter*]; see Gauthier's stirring manifesto, *Jésus, l'Église et les Pauvres: Réflexions nazaréennes pour le Concile* (Paris: Éditions Universitaires, 1963).

were episcopal declarations coming from Brazil, most notably from Dom Hélder Pessôa Câmara, and out of Africa from bishops who were striving to bridge the gap between the institution of the church as it had evolved, and the poor who largely constituted its members in these impoverished countries.[46]

At the several meetings of the "church of the poor group," common themes of concern and calls for renewal were voiced. Cardinal Pierre Gerlier, Archbishop of Lyons, argued at its inaugural assembly, on 26 October 1962, that it was "indispensable that the Church, which has no desire to be rich, be freed from the appearance of wealth. The Church must be seen for what it is: the Mother of the poor, whose first concern is to give her children bread for both body and soul."[47] Patriarch Maximos IV of Saigh (Melkite) worried that the population of working people was slipping away from the church. Msgr. George Mercier of the Missionaries of Africa and Bishop of Laghouat (Sahara de Argelia) was also concerned about the evangelization of the poor and workers and he urged giving the church once again a "poor face." The "church of the poor group" circulated Gauthier's document, *Jésus, l'Église et les Pauvres*, hoping for wider acceptance of its core principles among the bishops, forty-five of whom had attended the meeting of the group on 1

---

[46]Câmara's emotional plea: "Are we to spend our whole time discussing internal Church problems while two-thirds of mankind is dying of hunger?" is quoted in Charles Moeller, "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. History of the Constitution," in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, vol. 5, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler (New York, NY: Herder and Herder, 1969), 11.

[47]The quotation is found in *History of Vatican II*, vol. 2, *Formation of the Council's Identity: First Period and Intercession, October 1962 – September 1963*, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph A. Komonchak (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1995), 202.

December 1962 at which Cardinal Lercaro spoke. They even petitioned Cardinal

Cicognani, Secretary of State and President of the Secretariat for Extraordinary Affairs, for

a special commission or secretariat to deal with social justice, especially the topics most

pertinent for developing peoples: the evangelization of the poor, and the need for episcopal

renewal as regards communion with the poor—but the request never received official status

and the focus of the Council soon shifted to other matters.

Nonetheless, Cardinal Lercaro was able to address the whole Council (on 6

December 1962) and in the great *aula* he argued that the Fathers' center of attention—"the

sole theme of Vatican II in its entirety, the synthesizing idea, the point that gives light and

coherence to all the subjects thus far discussed and of all the work that we must

undertake"[48]—should be the church that preaches the gospel to the poor:

> We shall not be fulfilling our task properly if we do not make the center and soul of the
> doctrinal and legislative work of this Council the mystery of Christ in the poor and the
> evangelization of the poor. Not just as one subject among others, but as the central
> problem of the Council. The theme of this Council is, after all, [reprising Pope John
> XXIII's September 11th radio address] the church as it is, especially "the Church of the
> poor."[49]

The poverty of the church itself was also an issue at this, "the hour of the poor." Lercaro

based his ecclesiology christologically: that evangelical poverty was "an essential and

primary aspect of the mystery of Christ."[50] Like Gauthier, Lercaro perceived an ontological

link between the presence of Christ in the poor and the presence of Christ in the eucharist,

thus necessitating a way-of-being-church that had to be manifested most especially by the

---

[48]Quoted in Alberigo and Komonchak, *Vatican II*, 345-46.

[49]Quoted in ibid., 346.

[50]Quoted in ibid.

persons of the hierarchy. Lercaro closed his address with some concrete suggestions for reforms which would be needed so that the material means of the organization of the church (how "the Church presents itself," to reprise Pope John XXIII's phrase) were better able to respect the dignity of the poor: in essence, in place of episcopal luxury, the church would actually become an *ecclesia pauperum*.

Lercaro's call was applauded, but the commitment of the majority of the bishops proved transient, and the "church of the poor group" ended up only operating on the periphery of the great assembly. A year later, however, the focus of the group's effort shifted to incorporating some of their central ideas into the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium* (LG). Through the intervention of Cardinal Pierre Gerlier, specific language about the church as a visible sign of the mystery of God—"a poor and crucified sign," in fact—was proposed for what would become the opening paragraph of LG §8. For his part, the Belgian bishop Msgr. Charles-Marie Himmer tried to introduce into the opening chapter of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church a connection between the evangelical poverty of the church and the evangelization of the poor—but his attempt failed. Although both of these specific efforts were unsuccessful, it is possible to see the influence of the "church of the poor group" in the magnificent third paragraph of LG §8 which presents a forceful theology of evangelical poverty and talks about the relationship between the poor Jesus and the church of Jesus, as one existing primarily for the sake of the poor:

> Just as Christ carried out the work of redemption in poverty and oppression, so the Church is called to follow the same path if she is to communicate the fruits of salvation to men. . . . The Church encompasses with her love all those who are afflicted by human misery and she recognizes in those who are poor and who suffer, the image of

her poor and suffering founder. She does all in her power to relieve their need and in them she strives to serve Christ.[51]

It is, however, perhaps in the document entitled "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World," *Gaudium et spes*, that the fullest influence of the "church of the poor group" is found in raising up a theology of witness and solidarity, one "inspired by the spirit of the Beatitudes, and in particular by the spirit of poverty" (§72). Importantly, this same section uses the phrase "the struggle for justice and charity" to characterize the relationship between the Kingdom of Christ and the economic and social activity of the world. This "task of justice under the inspiration of charity" (also in GS §72) was to be the banner under which, after the Council, an official Justice and Peace commission would study the twofold problems of economic development and political justice.

One additional contribution to the modern understanding of sin coming from the work of the Second Vatican Council is to be found in its final promulgated document, the very Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World cited above. In Part I of *Gaudium et spes*, the topic of sin is taken up directly in §13 of the first chapter which is entitled, "The Dignity of the Human Person." Here the Fathers identify five components of the mystery of sin which, taken together, serve as a kind of magisterial theology of sin: (1) human freedom (freewill) is a gift "set by God," so sin is a course of action which is freely chosen: "They served the creature rather than the creator"; (2) prideful sin is the

---

[51]*Lumen gentium* [LG], in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents, Study Edition*, ed. Austin Flannery, O.P. (Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Company, 1987), §8, 357-58. (Hereafter all quotations from Second Vatican Council texts will be footnoted by citing the title of the individual document, the section number [§] referred to, and the page in the Flannery edition where the citation may be found.)

diminishment of human fulfillment: "For sin brought man [*sic*] to a lower state, forcing him away from the completeness that is his to attain"; (3) humankind is in the sway of concupiscence, the temptation to do evil: "When man looks into his own heart he finds that he is drawn towards what is wrong and sunk in many evils"; (4) there exists a (Pauline) tension between goodness and iniquity: "Man therefore is divided in himself . . . the whole life of men, both individual and social, shows itself to be a struggle, and a dramatic one, between good and evil, between light and darkness"; and, (5) freedom from the bondage of sin is achieved only by grace which comes from the Holy Spirit through Christ (an anti-Pelagianist stance): "Man finds that he is unable of himself to overcome the assaults of evil successfully . . . but the Lord himself came to free and strengthen man."[52]

The presentation of sin here in *Gaudium et spes* is marked by a realization that sin alienates both the person who acts freely and the society which bears the effects of sinful deeds. The emphasis on sin from the perspective of our relationship to God in Christ sets the stage for post-Conciliar increased attention to the dynamic of relationality in human evildoing and a growing appreciation of the social dimensions of sin.

After the Second Vatican Council

After Vatican II, the "genie" of the moral centrality of concern for the poor could not be put back into the bottle. Even the hierarchy of the church itself, its clergy and bishops, could no longer be exempt from the evangelical call to humility, service, and

---

[52]*Gaudium et spes*, §13, 914.

poverty—seen once as only the province of individuals on their route to perfection. This

readjustment in ecclesial self-understanding followed the broad move in the Conciliar

documents wherein "the mystery of the church" was apprehended less in terms of

hierarchical arrangements and more as an organic whole, the People of God bearing

witness. Central to this transformation were two points: (1) poverty as a way of life is an

obligation laid on the church against worldly allurements and in witness to the poverty of

Christ: to be a church that is poor,[53] and (2) the church's primary concern must be for the

poor to whom are due, in full measure, the gospel message brought by the poor Christ for

the salvation of all: to be a church in service to the poor.[54] This latter notion, in particular,

---

[53]A most interesting expression of this renewed spirit was the promulgation of *Thirteen Commitments*, a vow taken by an association of bishops coming out of the "church of the poor group." Signed anonymously, this call for a reformed way of life after the Council openly admitted "the deficiencies of our life of poverty" and pledged to foreswear all the trappings of wealth and prestige in order "to live in the ordinary manner of our population [n.1]"—eschewing even the titles ("Eminence," "Excellence," for example) which would indicate importance and power [n. 5]. In addition to personal reformation, the bishops also pledged to enter into the public fray on behalf of the poor to effect "a new social order worthy of sons of men and sons of God [n. 10]." See Marie Dominique Chenu, "Vatican II and the Church of the Poor," *Concilium* 104, *The Poor and the Church*, ed. Norbert Greinacher and Alois Müller (April 1977), 109-111.

[54]This exact sentiment was subsequently reflected by Pope John Paul II when he addressed the poor in Guadalajara, Mexico on 30 January 1979 during the convening of the Third General Conference of Latin American Bishops in Puebla: "I keenly desired this meeting, inhabitants of the district of Santa Cecilia, because I feel solidarity with you and because, being poor, you are entitled to my particular concern. I tell you the reason at once: the pope loves you because you are God's favorites. He himself, on founding his family, the Church, kept poor and needy humanity in mind. To redeem it, he sent precisely his Son, who was born poor and lived among the poor in order to make us rich with his poverty (cf. 2 Cor 8:9)"; available from Vatican: the Holy See [Official Web Site of the Holy See], http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/speeches/1979/january/documents/hf_jp-ii_s pe_19790130_messico-guadalajara-barrio-pobre_en.html.

was to prove foundational for the later development of the concept of a "preferential option for the poor."

One could reasonably regard certain post-Conciliar documents, the closing texts of the two convocations of Latin American bishops which occurred subsequent to the Second Vatican Council (the meeting in Medellín, Columbia in 1968 and the synod in Puebla, Mexico in 1979)—as well as the statement by the Second General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in 1971 entitled *Justice in the World*, which made explicit the dual nature of worldly evil, namely, "Recognition of sin in [both] its individual and social manifestations"[55]—as all constituting, in fact, an outgrowth of the work of the Vatican II "church of the poor group." Running parallel with these forward-looking magisterial documents was the birth of liberation theology, a theological innovation which would challenge the Roman magisterium (some might even say function as a "thorn in the flesh" for the Vatican). Whatever may be the true dimensions of the internecine ecclesial tension, it is clear that liberation theology provided an abiding influence on the consideration of sin during the papacy of John Paul II.

Highlighting the social dimension of sin, a core tenet of liberation theology, was actually a retrieval of the notion of human and divine solidarity which had underpinned the biblical understanding of sin (as discussed above) particularly in its relational aspects. For Paul, baptism into the *koinonia* or communion of the Body of Christ means that "none of us lives for oneself, and no one dies for oneself" (Rom 14:7). Since the individual is sanctified

---

[55]Synodus Episcoporum, 1971 [Synod of Bishops, 1971], *Justice in the World*, in *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage*, ed. David J. O'Brien and Thomas A. Shannon (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992), §51, 296.

by incorporation into a community, the People of God, that same solidarity is necessarily injured by any individual sin; restoration of unity to the Body of Christ, in turn, is sin's only real cure.[56] This communal dimension of salvation—the basis of our eschatological hope and our connection with the communion of saints—derives from the relational life of the trinitarian God which is imprinted on our souls. We are only able to fully realize ourselves, our divinized destiny to live interrelatedly as God does, in acts of love and communion with others; sin becomes, then, the failure to actualize our divine potential to live out loving relationships in authenticity, i.e., accomplish solidarity.[57] Community implies responsibility: and the ecclesial community, in particular, must be the efficacious sign of the love of God at work in the world. In uniting the "horizontal" to the "vertical," the church makes manifest the image of the triune God who bridged the separation of the two dimensions through the incarnation and the sending of the Spirit at Pentecost. Conversely, any absence of social harmony (i.e., social sin) necessitates the move of social conversion in the Body of Christ, the church as a whole, in order to rectify the wrong.

Another post-Vatican II development, also derived largely from liberation theology, was an understanding of the personal dimensions of sin becoming reified in the society at large: an objectification, so to speak, of original sin into the "sin of the world." *Structural*

---

[56]In much the same way, the sin of any one member of Israel was seen as a violation of the covenant that Yahweh had made with the Jewish people as a whole.

[57]Jesus' table fellowship with outcasts and sinners is a prolepsis of the openness and unity with all people which is to characterize the Christian community. Selfish human action—which operates contrary to this solidarity—obscures and weakens the divine plan for the realization of the kingdom. The ground line here is human action (*praxis*) which attends to the needs of others (ex., the good Samaritan in Lk 10:29-37).

sin is the term used to name the social manifestation of individual sin perduring in

institutions. A further point in this regard, one perceived at the Council itself, is that the

customs and mores of a society may function or collude to foster disvalues ("the effects of

sin" mentioned below) which, once created, further permeate the culture, codifying and

often extending inherent, sinful injustice:

> Without doubt frequent upheavals in the social order are in part the result of
> economic, political, and social tensions. But at a deeper level they come from
> selfishness and pride, two things which contaminate the atmosphere of society as well.
> As it is, man [*sic*] is prone to evil, but whenever he meets a situation where the effects
> of sin are to be found, he is exposed to further inducements to sin, which can only be
> overcome by unflinching effort under the help of grace."[58]

How to "overcome" these "further inducements to sin"—especially in their social

manifestations—would be a next and challenging task for magisterial investigation.

The historical perspective which has been presented in this section of the thesis ends

with discernment of an ecclesiastical shift in the theology of sin back to one more consonant

with the nature of sinfulness as originally understood: that is, a hamartiology marked by

greater appreciation for the communal and social dimensions of sin. This newfound (or

refound) understanding, prodded along under the momentum produced by the innovations

of liberation theology, would now have to be addressed by the hierarchy of the church.

Next under consideration in this dissertation, then, will be certain of those magisterial

---

[58]*Gaudium et spes*, §25, 926. John Paul II will later identify the two primary sinful predispositions which characterize this world as: "The all-consuming desire for profit, and . . . the thirst for power, with the intention of imposing one's will upon others"; Pope John Paul II, *On Social Concern* (*Sollicitudo rei socialis*), Encyclical Letter (30 December 1987), §37, in *Catholic Social Thought*, 420.

teachings coming after the Second Vatican Council in which the themes and concerns outlined above would find their major resonance and fullest articulation.

Magisterial Teaching

Introduction to the Church's Response to the Challenge of Social Sin

The contributions of Gustavo Gutiérrez and Juan Luis Segundo, two major liberation theologians, to the development of a theology of social sin, and the evolution of the use of the language of social sin in documents of the episcopal and Roman magisteria, has been well documented.[59] The Latin American episcopal conferences which occurred after the Second Vatican Council, along with the concomitant development of liberation theology, advanced the thinking about the social dimensions of sin. Importantly, in the language used by CELAM (*Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano*) at Medellín and Puebla, social sin is still understood as resulting from personal sin; thus, the need for individual conversion to overcome "situations of sin" does not go away.[60] The Roman magisterium

---

[59]See Rosemarie E. Gorman, "The Contributions of Gustavo Gutiérrez and Juan Luis Segundo to a Theology of Social Sin" (Ph.D. diss., The Catholic University of America, 1996), and Margaret Pfeil, "The Language of Social Sin."

[60]In that same vein, the papal magisterium has iterated on more than one occasion that moral agency can never be ascribed directly to sinful institutions: "A situation—or likewise an institution, a structure, society itself—is not in itself the subject of moral acts. Hence a situation cannot in itself be good or bad"; Pope John Paul II, *Reconciliation and Penance: In the Mission of the Church Today* (*Reconciliatio et paenitentia*), Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of His Holiness Pope John Paul II [2 December 1984], Vatican Translation (Boston, MA: Pauline Books & Media, 1984), §16.

has also continued to stress that social sin or "structures of sin," first used officially in a

Vatican document in *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (1987), are "rooted in personal sin, and thus

always linked to the *concrete acts* of individuals who introduce these structures, consolidate

them and make them difficult to remove. And thus they grow stronger, spread, and become

the source of other sins, and so influence people's behavior."[61] With the connection

between individual and social sin having been thus firmly established, Catholic theology was

positioned to refine two intertwined hamartiological concepts or "moments" of grace—the

initial call to repentance, a turning back to God called for in the gospel message,[62] and the

subsequent evidence of personal conversion, new and lasting ways of action—which now

needed expression in social terms. This look forward was actually to involve looking back

to key religious understandings from the past, in particular the divine-human relationship.

Biblical warrant for a morality more closely tied to relationality is found in the

concept of *righteousness* (*sedaqah*) derived from the notion of covenant explained earlier.

Ethical behavior as needing to go beyond the mere righting of inequality is an idea which

comes from the Old Testament: God's fidelity (*emet*) to the covenant with Israel is

understood to be based upon the divine prerogative of *hesed*, a word variously translated as

---

[61]Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, (§36). The idea mirrors an observation made in §16 of *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*: "Cases of *social sin* are the result of the accumulation and concentration of many *personal sins*."

[62]Cf. Mt 3:2: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" *Metanoia* (Gr., μετανοία) is the term used in the Christian testament for repentance; it is also the basis for the Latinate word *conversion*: both signify a turning around or transformation. For the purposes of this dissertation, "repentance" will denote more an affective change, the sadness of heart that leads to the resolve or "conversion" to alter personal and corporate behavior in terms of orthopraxis. *Metanoia* derives from the Hebrew root *shub* or *sûb* (שׁוּב) which also means "a change of direction" or "a turning back."

"loyalty," "compassion," "love," or "mercy." In response to God's offer of love, humankind must be faithful to God in return; fidelity to the covenantal relationship requires not only *hesed* reciprocally, but also *sedaqah*: righteous action on Israel's part.[63] With the two in concert, religion binds with ethics. In terms of action, this kind of faithfulness to God moves the comprehension of moral behavior beyond the ritual offerings prescribed in the laws of Leviticus toward real justice for the poor: "I desire *hesed* and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings" (Hos 6:6). In the New Testament, the dynamic is much the same: although it is through sin that humans stray, God is always faithful (cf. 2 Tim 2:12b-13). Justification, then, comes to us solely as a gift from God—though human cooperation with divine grace—in the form of repentance from our selfishness. In our show of repentance and in order to right our relations with God, there must be a willing return to Christ and to the gospel message of turning back to plenteous righteousness in our dealings with others: "We love because he first loved us" (1 Jn 4:19).

Conversion, as a consequence of repentance, can be thought of as the process by which an *internal* change in direction back to God (*metanoia*), a reshaping of personal values in relation to individual behavior, is verified by the *external* exercise of human freedom in discipleship: namely, in exhibiting the discipline of following Christ's example.

---

[63]Justice involves equal distribution (what is due), and intends an impartiality which serves redressing violations of law and renders straightforward judgments that are deserved. Righteousness (*sedaqah*) implies acting right according to a *relationship*: it is not even-handed or neutral, but is, rather, superabundant in graciousness. On the human level *sedaqah* is the stronger taking in the weak, e.g., kindness and compassion extended to the poor and suffering; on the divine level, God's "righteous deeds" are made evident, for example, when the Lord's wrath at Israel's faithlessness is turned back, and out of compassion God rights the relationship. See Joseph Jensen, O.S.B., *God's Word to Israel* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1988), 82-86.

Our participation in constructing the kingdom of God is demonstrated, particularly in the context of social sin, by increased attention to the needs of the poor. A further point: conversion, as a progressive change that takes place over time, often can only be achieved through unyielding resistance to the surrounding societal values. In that struggle we have freedom, but are not completely free. Hugh Connolly evokes Piet Schoonenberg's notion of *situated freedom* and explains that "it is only by a slow and gradual process therefore that one gains the wisdom, insight and strength to transcend, critique, and, if necessary, reject the prevailing values of one's own culture."[64] Any "moment" of repentance, therefore, is played out in an ongoing conversion, a gradual process of actualization of new identity in Christ. It is both a subjective event and an objective, continuing modification of both inner attitude and social behavior—a "once" moment that is also a "forever" change: the singular moral act of turning toward God is integrated into a lifetime of ever-developing and deepening discipleship.

Several key magisterial documents produced in the latter part of the twentieth century attempted to deal with these complex issues, and it is to these texts that this dissertation will now turn attention.

Background to the Convocations of the Latin American Bishops

CELAM, Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops [Medellín], 1968

---

[64]Connolly, *Sin*, 119. Any transformation in those societal values would, in turn, entail widespread personal conversions as a prerequisite.

"The Holy See established a commission in 1954 in Rome made up of the Secretaries of the Sacred Congregations more directly involved in Latin America . . . in order to 'study in a *joint* way the fundamental problems of Catholic life in Latin America.'"[65] At the First General Conference of Latin American Bishops held in Rio de Janeiro July-August 1955, CELAM (*Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano*) was born; governing statues were drawn up at CELAM's third meeting in 1958 and officially approved by Pope Pius XII in April of that year as "an organization for communication and collaboration among the Latin American Conferences of Bishops."[66]

Manuel Larraín, President of CELAM at the close of the Second Vatican Council in 1965, thought that the time had come for a large, general meeting of the Latin American church, and he proposed a convocation to coincide with Pope Paul VI's planned visit to Bogotá, Columbia in 1968 to attend the International Eucharistic Congress.[67] A preparatory session of CELAM for the upcoming episcopal conference, held in Mar del Plata, Argentina in October 1966, broached the problem of underdevelopment in Latin

---

[65]Cardinal Antonio Samoré, "Inaugural Address," in CELAM, Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops [Medellín], *Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops*. *The Church in the Present-Day Transformation of Latin America in Light of the Council*, Vol. 1, *Position Papers*, ed. Louis M. Colonnese (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1968), 59.

[66]Ibid., 62.

[67]Margaret Pfeil explains that episcopal conferences are intended to be pastoral in nature and are directed to the faithful encompassed in the region represented, helpfully adding that: "A[s] such they are considered less authoritative than exercises of the ordinary magisterium by the pope or by the bishops gathered in ecumenical council which are addressed to the universal church," Pfeil, "The Language of Social Sin," 71.

America, but analyzed the causes of poverty in the largely traditional terms of helping the

poor through charitable giving. One prophetic voice there at Mar del Plata, however, was

that of Dom Hélder Pessôa Câmara, a key figure from the "church of the poor group"; he

used language and touched upon themes that were to resonate in discussions at both of the

later CELAM meetings in Medellín and Puebla. In his address to this 1966 session, Dom

Hélder called for integral development and a profound social transformation bound to

conversion.[68] Archbishop Câmara also critiqued the institutional church, itself an important

player in the oppressive structure of Latin American society, and called for the church to

admit its complicity in the perdurance of poverty across the continent:

> The question concerns not only individuals but also peoples, since all need continual
> conversion without exception. There are not innocent peoples on the one hand, and
> sinful people on the other. There are differences in the commission of sins. . . .
> Moreover, she [the church] is obliged also to condemn the collective sin of unjust and
> anachronistic structures—not as if she were an outside observer, but as one
> recognizing her own share of responsibility and guilt.[69]

---

[68]The term "integral development" is used in a technical sense in liberation theology: traditional development (sometimes called *developmentalism*) is a pejorative term and refers to economic practices which promote business and trade but nonetheless keep the poor in a permanent state of underdevelopment. Integral development, in contrast, looks to policies which liberate the poor substantively from their plight of poverty. See Gustavo Gutiérrez, "Liberation and Development," *Cross Currents* 21:3 (Sum 1971), 243-56.

[69]Comisión Peruana Episcopal de Acción Social, ed. *Between Honesty and Hope: Documents from and About the Church in Latin America*, trans. John Drury (Maryknoll, NY: Maryknoll Publishing, 1970), 48, 49; quoted in Gorman, "The Contributions of Gustavo Gutiérrez and Juan Luis Segundo to a Theology of Social Sin," 85. Gorman later asserts that Dom Hélder Câmara's charge that there existed in Latin America a "situation of injustice" (*situación de injusticia*) and his call for a "structural revolution" (*revolución estructural*)—both terms used in an address he gave in Paris only months before the opening of Medellín—had a great impact on the language employed in the final magisterial documents issued by the 1968 episcopal conference; ibid., 91.

In July 1967 the Pontifical Commission for Latin America communicated Paul VI's approval to organize an episcopal conference with the proviso that "the guidelines and basic plans for the great meeting be examined *ex professo* [as priorly declared] and approved."[70] Meetings of bishops and experts (*periti*) in November 1967 and January 1968 sketched out the main themes of the conference which were aimed at updating the status of the church in Latin America in light of the developments which had occurred at the Second Vatican Council. In June 1968 a preparatory meeting established five discussion topics for the conference, published under the rubric, *Basic Document* (*Documento Base*). The five topics in the working paper prepared for the episcopal discussions ended up matching well with the final titles of the Conference's seven published position papers: (1) "Signs of the times in Latin America today," (2) "Christian interpretation of the signs of the times," (3) "The Church and human promotion," (4) Evangelization and growth in the faith," and (5) "The visible Church and pastoral coordination"—this last of which, however, was eventually expanded into three position papers, reflecting an increased pastoral emphasis which came to characterize the episcopal meeting.[71] One of the co-presidents of the conference, Archbishop Avelar Brandao Vilela, predicted in his inaugural address that the stage had been set for "*un nuevo Pentecostés*"[72] for the church in Latin America.

[70]Archbishop Avelar Brandao Vilela, "Inaugural Address," in CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 1*, Position Papers*, 72.

[71]Ibid., 73. Added were position papers entitled, "Pastoral Care of the Masses and the Elites" and "Pastoral Coordination."

[72]Ibid., 75. The term, "a new Pentecost," is used again later and amplified in the position paper (*ponencia*) presented at the conference by Monseñor Eduardo Pironio, General Secretary of CELAM: "The Latin American Church is now preparing itself to proclaim her message anew in the light of the Vatican Council II. For this reason it has

CELAM, Third General Conference of Latin American Bishops [Puebla], 1979

Although the Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops at Medellín

had developed the understanding of social sin far enough to be able to denounce the

situation of structural injustice that they observed all around as "institutionalized violence"

(*violencia institucionalizada*),[73] it was evident to all in the ten years ensuing after the

conference that there had been little actual progress in alleviating the dire conditions of the

poor in Latin America. The stubbornness of the true state of economic affairs was evident

to everyone, most especially the bishops: identifying a *situación de pecado* ("sinful

situation") was not the same as eradicating it. So it was that representatives from twenty-

---

come together in the 'communion of the Spirit' that assures and manifests the saving event
of a new Pentecost for Latin America," CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 1*,
Position Papers*, 111-12. (Critical quotations taken from the English-language translations
of the main CELAM documents are also given in the original Spanish version of the texts in
an appendix at the end of the dissertation, identified by thesis chapter and footnote number.
When the Spanish texts are not well translated, or when certain emphases and nuances are
not readily apparent in the official English translations used, the original Spanish version will
be given here in the main body of the text in curly brackets or braces [{}] *immediately
following* the citation in the footnote to each pericope. In order to avoid confusion, the use
of "ibid." with the CELAM texts will be foregone in favor of an abbreviated citation.)

[73]"The Christian believes . . . that justice is a prerequisite for peace. He recognizes
that in many instances Latin America finds itself faced with a situation of injustice that can
be called institutionalized violence," CELAM, Second General Conference of Latin
American Bishops [Medellín], *Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops. The
Church in the Present-Day Transformation of Latin America in Light of the Council*, Vol.
2, *Conclusions*, ed. Louis M. Colonnese (Washington, DC: United States Catholic
Conference, 1968), 78. {"No deja de ver que América Latina se encuentra, en muchas
partes, en una situación de injusticia que puede llamarse violencia institucionalizada,"
CELAM, Segunda Conferencia General del Episcopado Latinoamericano [Medellín], *La
Iglesia en la Actual Transformation de América Latina a la Luz del Concilio. II
Conclusiones*, Edición Oficial del Secretariado General del CELAM (Buenos Aires,
Argentina, 1968), 72.}

two Latin American countries decided to reconvene in early 1979 to constitute the next

great CELAM meeting (planned for Puebla, Mexico), the Third General Conference of

Latin American Bishops.

In a preamble to the conclusions of the Third General Conference, "Message to the

Peoples of Latin America," the bishops admit that they and other Christians "are still far

from living all that we preach."[74] And to that confession the Latin American bishops go on

to add by way of reparation: "We want not only to help others to self-conversion but also to

be converted along with them, so that our dioceses, parishes, institutions, communities, and

religious congregations will provide an incentive for living the Gospel rather than being an

obstacle to it."[75]

The methodology for accomplishing these aims will be nothing new, the CELAM

bishops explain. The technique to achieve this transformation—and its desired end-result,

too, for that matter—derives from the core evangelical message of the church. Not only

will the Gospel be lived out through conversion, but it will itself be the mechanism of

further conversion: "The Gospel we preach is such splendid Good News that it converts and

transforms people's mental and emotional schemes."[76]

---

[74]CELAM, Third General Conference of Latin American Bishops [Puebla], *Evangelization at Present and in the Future of Latin America. Final Document of the Third General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate* (Puebla de los Ángeles, Mexico. 27 Jan - 13 Feb 1979) (Washington, DC: National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1979), 31.

[75]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 31.

[76]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 32.

How well the documents from Medellín and Puebla accomplish the lofty aims set out in this preamble will be critically judged in subsequent chapters of this dissertation.

Documents of Pope John Paul II (Writings from the 1980s)

Pope John Paul II was to play a particularly important role in the development of magisterial teaching on sin after the Second Vatican Council for two reasons. First, Cardinal Karol Wojtyla came to the papacy right when the impulses for change emanating from the CELAM bishops' conferences and from the ever-more-urgent writings of prominent liberation theologians about the social nature of sin were all coming to the fore: these challenges from Latin America simply could not be ignored. Secondly, by the sheer length of his reign, John Paul II's papacy would cover such a long expanse of ecclesial history that he could not help but significantly shape the theological developments integral to his times. A substantial portion of this dissertation will examine the contributions made to the theology of sin by this first Polish pope. The character and provenance of his major magisterial documents in this regard will first be laid out.

Reconciliatio et paenitentia (Reconciliation and Penance), 1984

The 1983 Sixth General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops[77] after the Second Vatican Council concerned itself with two main issues related to sin: the sacrament of penance, in particular its dwindling utilization by many Catholics, and the church's role in dealing with contemporary conflicts subsumed under the general notion of social sin.[78] These particular emphases were chosen in response to two post-Vatican II developments: the outcome of the reformed Rite Of Penance promulgated in 1974,[79] and the growth of liberation theology.

---

[77]The Synod of Bishops was established by Pope Paul VI by the Motu Proprio *Apostolica sollicitudo* promulgated on 15 September 1965. Pope Paul VI gave the definition of a Synod of Bishops at the Sunday Angelus of 22 September 1974: "It is an ecclesiastic institution, which, on interrogating the signs of the times and as well as trying to provide a deeper interpretation of divine designs and the constitution of the Catholic Church, we set up after Vatican Council II in order to foster the unity and cooperation of bishops around the world with the Holy See. It does this by means of a common study concerning the conditions of the Church and a joint solution on matters concerning Her mission. It is neither a Council nor a Parliament but a special type of Synod," Pope Paul VI, *Angelus Domini* [Sunday Angelus], 22 September 1974; available from Vatican: the Holy See [Official Web Site of the Holy See], http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/angelus/1974/documents/hf_p-vi_ang_19740922_it.html.

[78]As defined by the Synod: "Those evils in our world which are denying people the possibility of the true liberation and the fullness of human life." Later, the bishops note in particular, "The unjust distribution of the world's resources and those structures whereby the rich become richer and the poor poorer," "The Statement of the 1983 Synod of Bishops," in Synod of Bishops, Synodus Episcoporum, Rome, 1983, *Penance and Reconciliation in the Mission of the Church* (Washington, DC: National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1984), 5.

[79]Several bishops, worried over the evident decline in recourse to sacramental penance, attributed the problem to a loss of the personal sense of sin and to the need for interior conversion. Archbishop Edmund Szoka of Detroit was careful to point out, however, that, as regards the problem of fewer of the faithful receiving the sacrament of penance, "this diminution occurred *before* the promulgation of the new Rite Of Penance (*Misericordiam Suam*) in 1974," "An Exhortation to the Synod Members," in ibid., 17.

In the outlines for episcopal input fashioned by the Synod General Secretariat and distributed prior to the meeting in Rome (*Lineamenta*, 1982), an explanation is given for the origins of the emergent concept of structural sin. Although Margaret Pfeil hails this account as "a new interpretation,"[80] the old struggle to properly align external sinfulness with internal responsibility—a contentious issue from the past which will continue to surface as the Roman magisterium grapples with the notion of social sin—is manifest even at this early stage: "The sinner . . . will tend to discover them [sins] in the structures of society [even though] it must be asserted that the unjust structures are the fruit of personal sin in such a way that at the same time they offer to the person a further invitation to sin."[81] The concern here appears to be that identification of sin in societal structures might take away from the human responsibility for the sin and, thus, function as exculpatory in a self-serving way; this concern is repeated and expanded upon in §25 of *Lineamenta*: "While one can justifiably think of determinate 'structures' which are the consequence of sin and which are at the same time elements which have an influence in driving one to sin, one cannot think at all of a type of sin which can be apart from the freedom and responsibility of the person, even though the liberty of the individual may have an essential social and community dimension."[82] The core difficulty of how to apportion traditional elements of moral agency (e.g., human freedom and moral responsibility) in regard to social sin remains a sticking point.

---

[80]Pfeil, "The Language of Social Sin," 108.

[81]Synod Secretariat, "Reconciliation and Penance in the Mission of the Church: *Lineamenta*," §7, in *Origins* 11:36, 18 February 1982, 569.

[82]Ibid., 574.

The actual working document for the Synod, *Instrumentum laboris* (1982), which synthesized the responses to *Lineamenta*, expresses a similar conclusion—that sin can only be a consequence of human free choice (§7-8)—and relates sinfulness to the concept of concupiscence as a consequence of the Fall:

> The inclination to evil, which remains after original sin and is increased through actual sin, exercises its influence on these same social structures which are in a certain way signs of personal sin. We speak here of an objective, social, political, economic, cultural situation which is contrary to the Gospel itself, for which the person must feel responsible, since it certainly derives from the free will of that person, either alone or in association with others. It is in this sense that we rightly speak of social sin, which some call "structural." Still every sin always has a social dimension, since the will of every human being is by nature oriented towards society.[83]

It is this social aspect of the *consequences* of sin that provides the bishops a way to balance the human freedom to choose between good and evil in the context of evangelical moral norms, while still acknowledging social sin as greater than personal sin. Conversely, the bishops explain, individual moral agency and personal responsibility can coalesce in the face of social sin and result in the promotion of social justice, the only way in fact by which the sinner's return to grace can be assured "since reconciliation with God demands and also necessarily involves reconciliation with other persons . . . [and so leads to] the elimination of unjust structures and to a restoration of right order" (§24).[84]

---

[83]Synod of Bishops, *Reconciliation and Penance in the Mission of the Church. Unofficial Translation of the Working Document* [*Instrumentum laboris*] *for the Sixth General Assembly Synod of Bishops 1983* (Ottawa: Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1983), §13; quoted in Pfeil, "The Language of Social Sin," 109.

[84]Synod of Bishops, *Reconciliation and Penance in the Mission of the Church*; quoted in ibid., 110.

Before the convening of the 1983 Synod, there was also in that same year a meeting of the International Theological Commission (ITC) which issued a report, *Reconciliation and Penance*. In it were formulated several of the core concepts which were to undergird the discussions at the Synod of Bishops. First, the ITC report recognizes a dynamic relationship operant in the social dimension of sin: "Man's [*sic*] guilt and sins express themselves in the organizations and structures created by man and by society. In their turn these organizations and structures exercise a profound influence on people living in them, render the exercise of liberty more difficult, and may even be an invitation to sin."[85] The theologians are careful to point out, however, that "despite the weight of their influence on the personal conduct of individuals we can speak of 'sinful structures' and 'structural sin' at the most only in an analogous sense. In the proper sense of the term only man is capable of sin."[86] This decisive stand in hamartiological agency was to find expression later at the Synod and would likewise bear on the language used in John Paul II's Apostolic Exhortation of the year following.[87] The theologians attach to individuals' sacramental exercise the (somewhat qualified) obligation that their "penance and conversion, whenever possible, must work for a change in these structures. Such changes presuppose personal conversion . . ."[88] Thus, a first and internal personal conversion has a secondary and necessarily external social dimension: "Reconciliation with God must lead to reconciliation

---

[85]International Theological Commission, "Reconciliation and Penance," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 51:3 (1985), 171.

[86]Ibid.

[87]Cf. Pope John Paul II, *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, §16, 35-39.

[88]International Theological Commission, "Reconciliation and Penance," 172.

with our brethren and must contribute to the establishment of a communion of love . . .

Because (not 'although') it [penance] is a personal act, it also has a social dimension."[89]

At the Synod itself, there were varying opinions expressed as to the nature of social

sin. Cardinal Carlo Martini began by outlining the task before the bishops as reconciling the

personal and social dimensions of sin, inasmuch as both the sinner and sin itself are

"oriented towards society," noting further that unjust structures "have their source in human

free will." [90] An address by Archbishop John R. Roach of St. Paul and Minneapolis reflects

perhaps the prevailing understanding of sin at work at the Synod: personal sin is seen to

extend outward and have "societal ramifications"; the structures and institutions of society,

in turn, then "embody the effects of sin," become "disordered," and thereby "pose an

obstacle to human freedom."[91] While acknowledging that these limitations on human

freedom imposed from without may influence "the degree of subjective merit or guilt

associated with an objective action," Archbishop Roach nonetheless concludes that "the

knowledge and strength which the Spirit gives"—regardless of an individual's particular

existential, i.e., social condition—provides "radical freedom of self-determination . . . at the

heart of the human person," thereby enabling all persons to overcome any moral obstacle.[92]

---

[89]Ibid.

[90]Carlo Maria Cardinal Martini, "Report by Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini on 'Reconciliation and Penance in the Church's Mission,'" *L'Osservatore Romano*, Oct 10, 1983, 4.

[91]Archbishop John R. Roach, "Are Christians Free?," in *Penance and Reconciliation in the Mission of the Church* , 31.

[92]Ibid., 31, 32. Much of this argument will be taken up by Pope John Paul II and incorporated explicitly in §16 of his Apostolic Exhortation, *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*; see discussion below.

Not all of the bishops attending the Synod were so sanguine in their assessment of an individual's ability to overcome social sin. Making a clear connection between "the personal reality of sin and the many moral evils that afflict our society,"[93] some of the Latin American bishops pressed for a greater acceptance of social sin arguing that "it is not sufficient to consider [only] the social dimension of all sins."[94] While there was general agreement that structures do not sin, it was likewise affirmed with equal conviction that, in the words of Archbishop Angelo Fernandes, those who would "create and perpetuate these structures that oppress and dehumanize their fellow human beings must bear the responsibility in their consciences."[95] Thus, the matter of parsing individual accountability for social sin was broached, but hardly solved.

In the end, the synodal fathers approved 63 *propositiones* which were then turned over to Pope John Paul II for use in his Apostolic Exhortation of the following year, *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*: the first 21 of the *propositiones* concerned the church's overall mission of reconciliation which was deemed to encompass both the prophetic denunciation of sin and the charitable witness of service to the poor; the last 42 of the *propositiones*

---

[93]Martini, "'Reconciliation and Penance in the Church's Mission,'" 4.

[94]Cardinal Paulo Evaristo Arns, "Social Sin," (written intervention, 1983 Synod of Bishops) *L'Osservatore Romano*, 31 Oct 1983, 14. Margaret Pfeil reports that Cardinal Arns went on to suggest some parameters for determining responsibility for social sin "including failure to exercise critical judgment in an unjust situation and neglect of the existing possibilities for change and participation in the common good," Pfeil, "The Language of Social Sin," 116.

[95]Archbishop Angelo Fernandes, "A Perspective for the Synod," *Origins* 13:21, 3 Nov 1983, 364-5; quoted in Pfeil, "The Language of Social Sin," 117.

directly concern problems related to penance and reconciliation, focusing most especially on

the relatively recent renewal of the sacramental practice of penance.

Sollicitudo rei socialis (On Social Concern), 1987

In response to the post-Vatican II development of liberation theology, the

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) issued two instructions on the concept of

liberation, making certain points which the Roman magisterium thought important to clarify.

In the first of these documents (approved by Pope John Paul II in August 1984), the CDF

makes clear that "the full ambit of sin, whose first effect is to introduce disorder into the

relationship between God and man [*sic*], cannot be restricted to 'social sin.' The truth is

that only a correct doctrine of sin will permit us to insist on the gravity of its social

effects."[96] That corrected doctrine of sin is then articulated in language reminiscent of John

Paul II's in §16 of the earlier Apostolic Exhortation, *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*:

> Nor can one localize evil principally or uniquely in bad social, political, or economic
> "structures" as though all other evils came from them so that the creation of the "new
> man" would depend on the establishment of different economic and socio-political
> structures. To be sure, there are structures which are evil and which cause evil and
> which we must have the courage to change. Structures, whether they are good or bad,
> are the result of man's [*sic*] actions and so are consequences more than causes. The
> root of evil, then, lies in free and responsible persons who have to be converted by the

---

[96]Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction on Certain Aspects of the "Theology of Liberation"* [*Libertatis nuntius*], Vatican translation (Boston, MA: St. Paul Books & Media, 1984), §IV, no. 14.

grace of Jesus Christ in order to live and act as new creatures in the love of neighbor and in the effective search for justice, self-control, and the exercise of virtue.[97]

There is then, according to the document, an explicit understanding of conversion as deriving solely from the ineffable "grace of Jesus Christ" and so not necessarily reliant upon more earthbound processes, such as perceptive economic analysis of the structural causes of poverty (let alone a Marxist one); nor is any kind of direct encounter with the poor mentioned as vital to the transformative process of turning away from "the root of evil." Rather, magisterial catechesis leading to right intention receives full fiducial approval: "In order to answer the challenge leveled at our times by oppression and hunger, the Church's Magisterium has frequently expressed her desire to awaken Christian consciences to a sense of justice, social responsibility, and solidarity with the poor and the oppressed, and to highlight the present urgency of the doctrine and imperatives contained in Revelation."[98] The CDF document then goes on to criticize the "theologies of liberation" for challenging "the *sacramental and hierarchical structure* of the Church, which was willed by the Lord Himself,"[99] in their putative bypassing of the authority of the Roman magisterium to

---

[97]Ibid., §IV, no. 15. The same notion is reiterated later on (§XI, no. 8) when the Instruction declares that even though there exists an "acute need for radical reforms of the structures which conceal poverty and which are themselves forms of violence, [that reality] should not let us lose sight of the fact that the source of injustice is in the hearts of men. Therefore it is only by making an appeal to the *moral potential* of the person and to the constant need for interior conversion, that social change will be brought about which will be truly in the service of man [*sic*]."

[98]Ibid., §V, no. 1.

[99]Ibid., §IX, no. 13.

interpret the word of God, and consequent disputation of magisterial teaching on the true

nature of sin.[100]

     A year and a half after *Libertatis nuntius*, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the

Faith issued a second Instruction entitled, *Libertatis conscientia*, approved by Pope John

Paul II in March 1986. In between these two CDF documents the effort by the Vatican to

reign in the perceived misguided excesses of liberation theology climaxed in the silencing of

the noted Brazilian liberation theologian, Leonardo Boff, in May 1985.[101] The CDF

pointedly establishes in *Libertatis conscientia* its own definition of freedom: "The first and

fundamental meaning of liberation which thus manifests itself is the salvific one: man [*sic*] is

---

[100]In his rebuttal to *Libertatis nuntius*, Juan Luis Segundo warns against accepting a
state of affairs wherein "if no laws are broken—or if their breaking is not visible—Christians
do not worry about their complicity in the great evils which society, through its structures,
causes to fall upon the most defenseless," Juan Luis Segundo, *Theology and the Church: A
Response to Cardinal Ratzinger and a Warning to the Whole Church*, rev. ed., translated
by John W. Diercksmeier (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1987), 62.

[101]The silencing was lifted in late March 1986 after the fruitful meeting in Rome
between senior Brazilian bishops and Pope John Paul II which had occurred a few weeks
earlier. According to Barry Stenger, "The positive resolution of John Paul II's meeting on
these matters with the Brazilian bishops only two weeks prior to Ratzinger's [prefect of the
Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith] second instruction may account for the more
conciliatory tone of that 1986 statement"; see Barry J. Stenger, "The Option for the Poor in
Latin American Liberation Theology" (Ph.D. diss., The University of Chicago, 1987), 152.

freed from the radical bondage of evil and sin."[102] Sin is always a human phenomenon and

an individual responsibility:

> Thus the Church does not hesitate to condemn situations of life which are injurious to
> man's [*sic*] dignity and freedom . . .   However, they [the structures] always depend on
> the responsibility of man, who can alter them . . . One can therefore speak of
> structures marked by sin, but one cannot condemn structures as such.[103]

In the end, the CDF recommends a twofold strategy for bringing about social justice:

> The recognized priority of freedom and of conversion of heart in no way eliminates the
> need for unjust structures to be changed. It is therefore necessary to work
> simultaneously for the conversion of hearts and for the improvement of structures. For
> the sin which is at the root of unjust situations is, in a true and immediate sense, a
> voluntary act which has its source in the freedom of individuals. Only in a derived and
> secondary sense is it applicable to structures, and only in this sense can one speak of
> 'social sin.'"[104]

---

[102]The document iterates this point when it asserts that "it is the poor, the object of
God's special love, who understand best and as it were instinctively that the most radical
liberation, which is liberation from sin and death, is the liberation accomplished by the
Death and Resurrection of Christ," Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction
on Christian Freedom and Liberation* [*Libertatis conscientia*]; available from Vatican: the
Holy See [Official Web Site of the Holy See],
http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19
860322_freedom-liberation_en.html.), §23, §22.

[103]Ibid., §74. This same point is reiterated in the next section: "The Church is of
course aware of the complexity of the problems confronting society and of the difficulties in
finding adequate solutions to them. Nevertheless she considers that the first thing to be
done is to appeal to the spiritual and moral capacities of the individual and to the permanent
need for inner conversion, if one is to achieve the economic and social changes that will
truly be at the service of man [*sic*]"; ibid., §75.

[104]Most liberation theologians would openly agree with the basic points made by the
CDF. For example, Gustavo Gutiérrez himself writes that "the importance of the social
consequences of sin does not mean forgetting that sin is always the result of a personal, free
act," *The Truth Shall Make You Free*, trans. Matthew O'Connell (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis
Books, 1990), 137.

It is in the context of these two CDF pronouncements (*Libertatis nuntius*, 1984, and *Libertatis conscientia*, 1986) that John Paul II fashions his major encyclical of the following year addressing social concerns, *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (1987).

Documents of Pope John Paul II (Writings from the 1990s)

Overall, the Roman magisterium under the pontifical leadership of John Paul II continued to maintain the same core principles of moral agency and accountability for social sin throughout the Polish pope's long papacy. There were, however, certain passages in various writings produced in 1990s which suggest a somewhat more nuanced understanding of the parameters of the problem. Those shifts in emphasis and development in thinking are briefly spelled out below. A detailed analysis of the contributions offered by these innovations to the understanding of moral agency in the context of social sin will be given in chapters of this dissertation following.

Centesimus annus (The Centenary), 1991

In looking back on the hundred years since the promulgation of *Rerum novarum* in 1891, and "the fruitfulness of the principles enunciated by [Pope] Leo XIII,"[105] Pope John Paul II finds that the "new things" his predecessor lamented—human labor considered as a mere commodity, the transformation of society into two classes of rich and poor, the

---

[105]*Centesimus annus* (*The Centenary*), in *Catholic Social Thought*, §3, 441.

deplorable condition of the industrial workers, along with a notable decline in their morality—were largely still to be found in the world of his day. In his critique, the pope from communist Poland finds the ideology of socialism, in particular, a threat to the notion of individual moral agency and therefore to be especially discredited: "Socialism likewise maintains that the good of the individual can be realized without reference to his free choice, to the unique and exclusive responsibility which he exercises in the face of good or evil. . . . and [consequently] the concept of the person as the autonomous subject of moral decision disappears."[106] The important connection between human autonomy and moral responsibility, decried as being subverted in socialism, is also admitted to be subject to undermining by the conditions of capitalistic oppression, about which the pope laments:

> Man [*sic*] receives from God his essential dignity and with it the capacity to transcend every social order so as to move towards truth and goodness. But he is also conditioned by the social structure in which he lives, by the education he has received and by his environment. These elements can either help or hinder his living in accordance with the truth. The decisions which create a human environment can give rise to specific structures of sin which impede the full realization of those who are in any way oppressed by them.[107]

While John Paul II is talking here mostly about the harmful effects of economic "structures of sin" on the life of the poor, his acknowledgment of the influence of the broader social situation on an individual's capacity for autonomy opens the door for a more refined comprehension of how conscience and ethical decision-making can be conditioned by circumstances (which "help or hinder") external to the moral agent. Human beings'

---

[106]*Centesimus annus*, §13, 448.

[107]*Centesimus annus*, §38, 468.

exercise of freedom would indeed, after all, appear "situated" (Schoonenberg), as will be discussed more fully below.

Tertio millennio adveniente (The Coming Third Millennium), 1994

Another development in the later writings of John Paul II is a greater appreciation of corporate identity—moral accountability understood as beyond the realm of any one individual and more the result of a plural subject's actions over long stretches of time. Promotion of a corporate understanding of the church-as-agent, the People of God collectively sharing in the one life of the militant church, is suggested by the pope's call to repentance in the 1994 Apostolic Letter, *Tertio millennio adveniente* (*The Coming Third Millennium*) which was written in anticipation of the jubilee year of 2000.

The foundation for John Paul II's reflections on the jubilee is drawn from the Law of Moses (Ex 23:10-11; Lv 25:1-28; Dt 15:1-6), through the prophecy of Third Isaiah (Is 61:1-2; 58:6), to the proclamation of Jesus found in the gospel of Luke 4:18-19 at the very beginning of his ministry in Nazareth: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord." The returning to God of the riches of creation, constituted by Israel's restoration of ancestral land and restitution of lost liberty at the time of the jubilee, is a sign of humility which is appropriate before the Lord of the universe—one which the Catholic church itself is called upon to emulate at the momentous turn of the millennium

coming up. The pope outlines other measures, too, which should be taken in preparation of

the jubilee, noting especially the call to Christian unity—"willed by God for his

People"[108]—as a most suitable goal befitting the moment and worth striving for mightily.

Towards the middle of the letter, the pope departs from the joy of celebrating the

jubilee to a somber recognition of the historical past of the church, a chronicle burdened by

sin and one which he simply can not overlook. It is in looking at that history which is

neither his to own personally, nor wholly escapable as it is most obviously a legacy which he

has inherited, that John Paul II confronts the knotty problems of "the sin of the world" (Jn

1:29). In his discourses the pontiff references large-scale transgressions mostly political in

nature (such as the Inquisition), not the economic injustices of underdevelopment and

poverty. Still, this move towards a communal understanding of sinfulness fits more easily

onto the contours of social sin which is understood to exist beyond the control of any single

moral agent. What is most interesting here is John Paul II's fuller apprehension of a plural

subject, namely the church, as operating and responsible as a single constituent identity.

Ut unum sint: On Commitment to Ecumenism (That They May Be One), 1995

Ut unum sint (*That May They Be One*), Pope John Paul II's 12th encyclical, would

seem at first to be unrelated to the main concerns of this dissertation, moral agency and

---

[108]*Tertio millennio adveniente* (*The Coming Third Millennium*), §34; available from Vatican: the Holy See [Official Web Site of the Holy See], http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_10111 994_tertio-millennio-adveniente_en.html.

social sin. The intention of this 1995 letter, after all, is to explore those issues preventing Christian unity and to urge the furthering of the ecumenical dialogue already begun among the Christian churches. Yet the broad focus of the pope—on churches and ecclesial communities as collective subjects who together share in a life of grace, and not solely on constituent individuals who are accountable singly to God for their actions—provides a fruitful basis for examining John Paul's views on both the nature of collective sin and the need for communal conversion.

In *Ut unum sint* John Paul II says that communion in the Holy Spirit is more than an aggregation of disparate elements: "This unity bestowed by the Holy Spirit does not merely consist in the gathering of people as a collection of individuals. It is a unity constituted by the bonds of the profession of faith, the sacraments and hierarchical communion."[109] The unity of the church is grounded upon the indwelling of God which establishes its life: it is the bonding of the faithful through the Spirit in the communion of the Son who communes with the Father; *koinonia*, then, is a trinitarian reality.[110] The vertical or "spiritual" dimension (which for some may be their sole experience of church) is, in fact, also the basis of our horizontal activity *as* church. In both instances the overlay of unity establishes for the individual membership in a plural reality, an incorporation which must be reckoned with

---

[109]Pope John Paul II, *Ut unum sint. On Commitment to Ecumenism*, Vatican Translation (Boston, MA: Pauline Books & Media, 1995), §9, 20.

[110]"For the Catholic Church, then, the *communion* of Christians is none other than the manifestation in them of the grace by which God makes them sharers in his own *communion*, which is his eternal life"; ibid., §9, 21. The idea of our participation in the life of the Trinity as vital to overcoming sin is developed in chapter five of this dissertation.

in regard to both the sinful actions taken in the church's past and any necessary conversion to be effected in the future.

The call for Christian unity made by the Second Vatican Council in the Decree on Ecumenism (*Unitatis redintegratio*) remains unfulfilled, the pontiff notes, and the lack of full communion among the churches and ecclesial communities is deemed to be against God's plan for the church and the world: "The unity of all divided humanity is the will of God."[111] John Paul II begins with the soteriological observation that Jesus died for all so that all could be saved in the one Christ; he quotes the evangelist John's account of Caiaphas's prophesy that "Jesus was going to die for the nation, and not only for the nation, but also to gather into one the dispersed children of God" (11:51b-52), among other texts, to make his point.[112]

Even though we are saved only through incorporation into the one body of Christ, the church here on earth lacks full expression of the unity implied by its foundation in the saving acts of Jesus. To begin the process of overcoming that divide, the pope urges dialogue as "an indispensable step along the path towards human self-realization, the self-realization both of each individual and of every human community."[113] John Paul II teaches, using personalist language which suggests acceptance of the notion of a plural subject, that self-realization of the community is achieved as a whole: "All dialogue implies

---

[111]Ibid., §6, 18.

[112]The pope also quotes Jesus' final prayer of unity at the Last Supper: "I pray not only for them [the disciples], but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one [*ut unum sint*], as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us" (Jn 17:20-22).

[113]Ibid., §28, 40.

a global, existential dimension. It involves the human subject in his or her entirety; dialogue

between communities involves in a particular way the subjectivity of each."[114] Comfortable

with the acknowledgment of group identity, the Roman pontiff is now ready to explore

means of conversion and transformation that will help bring about the full communion that

is so ardently wished for by the church. Those steps and their implications for broader

consideration of social sin and moral agency will be discussed in detail in later chapters.

The long development of the theology of sin has been presented here by means of a

retrospective review consisting of four components bearing on its evolution: scripture,

tradition, the Second Vatican Council, and, most especially for the purposes of this

dissertation, key post-Vatican II magisterial documents. That latter corpus of texts will be

examined in detail after the groundwork has been laid in the next chapter outlining the basic

tenets of the concept of moral agency and establishing a heuristic device to use in

synthesizing key points gleaned from the selected magisterial documents. All along the

way, the novel development of social sin will be understood—like all sin—to exist in the

four different, though overlapping, ways of considering sin which were postulated at the

beginning of this thesis: (1) sin as transgression of law (*sin of commission*), (2) sin as failure

to uphold the love of God by withholding ethical action (*sin of omission*), (3) sin as a

breach in divine and human relationships (*sin of failing to love*), and (4) sin as rejection of

God (*sin of refusing God's grace*). Uncovering the underpinnings of the complex interface

of social sin (in all its multifaceted nature) with personal moral agency will be taken up

next—a task that is, in equal parts, both challenging and intriguing.

[114]Ibid.

CHAPTER TWO

MORAL AGENCY

Trying to explain conscience is like trying to nail jello to the wall; just when you think you have it pinned down, part of it begins to slip away.

Richard M. Gula, *Reason Informed by Faith*

Introduction

Sin—even the "sin of the world" (Jn 1:29)—does not exist on its own: its genesis is always personal, although not necessarily singular; and it involves human beings who actively operate in this world in relationship to a God "out there." In the religious context, human actions are undertaken in constant conversation with an order of moral norms perceived as both extrinsic to the agent and yet also capable of being internalized through the grace of God's revelation by means of human reason. Having looked at the development of the theology of sin in the scriptures and in the tradition of the church, it is clear that there has been considerable evolution in the core concepts of hamartiology over time. As the persons who cause sin, human beings must shoulder the responsibility for the agential role in action and seek to temper any maleficent inclination towards evil through the proper exercise of conscience and informed personal decision-making.

This chapter will begin with a historical review of the development of the Christian understanding of moral agency by outlining some of the basic notions that come from those twin pillars of classical Catholic theology, St. Augustine and Thomas Aquinas. The issues outlined will then be brought forward to the current age and the post-Vatican II evolution of moral theology—one spurred by the development of the modern social sciences which have altered our way of understanding the person-as-agent. Part II of this chapter is devoted to establishing a framework of five questions which pertain to moral agency, especially in its still largely undefined relationship to social sin. These questions, in turn, will provide a means to investigate in some detail the selected magisterial texts highlighted in the previous chapter, thereby offering a means for further analysis of the relationship between social sin and moral agency in the subsequent chapters of this dissertation.

Historical Perspective

To begin with a definition, moral agency is the term used to delineate the relationship between the person and the actions performed by that person against a horizon of value meanings—values which, in the matter of sinfulness and in context of the Catholic theological tradition, are based upon the gospel of Jesus Christ. Parameters of agency are foundational for determination of consequent considerations in moral assessment such as responsibility, culpability, and the like. Sin, then, can be defined as the moral evil (actions) which results from moral agents (persons).

A distinction is sometimes made, as was noted above, between the action and the actor, although both are inextricably intertwined; ethical behavior itself can be similarly bifurcated, although here, too, the components overlap. *Action morality* presumes the freedom of the person and ascribes rightness and wrongness to actions and degrees of accountability thereto in the face of an individual's obligation to act; *agent morality* judges the person who performs—or does not perform—obligatory ethical actions and ascribes goodness, leading to praiseworthiness, or badness, leading to blame or even punishment, for the actions committed.[1] Additionally, agent morality, focusing on the person, takes into consideration subjective considerations of motive ("acting out of love") and intention ("meaning well" or "striving for the right"). The long history of the attempt to define the bounds of moral agency lays open its many vexing issues, which will now be explored chronologically.

Classical Christian Tradition

St. Augustine

Augustine, of all the Church Fathers, most firmly established the foundation of moral agency on the concept of free will: *peccatum non esse ubi non est liberum voluntatis*

---

[1]See Andrew G. Oldenquist, *Moral Philosophy: Text and Readings*, Second Edition (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1978).

arbitrium.[2] Personal control is fundamental to moral authorship: it is the individual who determines, in conjunction with human desire, which of several alternative actions—which must be available if there is to be freedom of choice—will be taken. Moreover, to be one's own, the action itself cannot be the result of mere chance; nor can it be subject to either internal exigencies which overwhelm or external coercions which compel. And so, the moral agent, through the free exercise of the will (*voluntate*), becomes morally responsible for the actions taken: in Augustinian thought, sin is willed.

Moving away from his earliest Manichaean belief in the "two souls," one good and the other evil, Augustine developed his thinking about moral responsibility and came to place greater weight on the motivation behind the action, defined in matter of sin as the love of the temporal (*cupiditas*) over the eternal.[3] Humanity's goodness is directly proportional to the degree of the soul's adherence to God: that is, the degree of the soul's obedience to God's will. Augustine even extends the notion of blameworthiness to include willing complicity in actions done by the hands of others.[4]

---

[2]Loosely translated, "There is no sin where there is no free exercise of the will"; quoted in William S. Babcock, "Augustine on Sin and Moral Agency," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 16:1 (Spr 1988), 32. The original quote comes from Augustine, *Contra Fortunatum Manichaeum* [*Acts or Disputation against Fortunatus the Manichaean*], 20, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, vol. 4, 113-124 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974).

[3]The mind—at least the mind open to the wisdom of God—is always considered by Augustine to be stronger than (and therefore capable of controlling) the lusts of the heart. The mind in the sway of a true compulsion, however, could not be held culpable. It is this conflict between free will and determinism which was to cause Augustine some difficulty, as will be explained later.

[4]Babcock, "Augustine on Sin and Moral Agency," 37.

Sin is the movement away from God's light; grace, the motion toward it. God's grace is the basis of all good action; it for this reason that Augustine writes: "Even when a human being begins to have good merits, he ought not to attribute them to himself, but to God."[5] A mind rightly ordered to the good, the eternal, cannot be swayed by lust or cupidity which is thought to be weaker than virtue;[6] descent into sin, then, is completely voluntary. In fact, Augustine argues in his early writings that the will to do good is achieved "with perfect ease."[7] Our deliberate choice to do evil is what actually constitutes our moral culpability in sinning.

In time, Augustine developed his thinking about the "mechanics" of salvation: how sinful humanity, created by and for the good, is restored to right relationship with God. In his argumentation, Augustine turns to the Pauline notion of conformity to Christ and used its parameters to give account for both sin and redemption. The exercise of our will in turning away from conformity with God's will is what constitutes sin. Augustine explains that the soul alienated from God resides in a region of unlikeness (*regio dissimilitudinis*); it

---

[5]*Grace and Free Choice*, from *The Works of Saint Augustine*, trans. Roland J Teske, pt. I, vol. 6 (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1999), 2.2; quoted in Katherin A. Rogers, "Augustine's compatibilism," *Religious Studies* 40:4 (Dec 2004), 420.

[6]"It is certain that we will when we will, but [God] causes us to will what is good," *Grace and Free Choice*, 16:32; quoted in ibid. And again, in *Retractions*, 9.6, Augustine writes: "The good use of free will, which is virtue, is also from God, and is numbered among the great goods"; quoted in ibid., 423.

[7]*De libero arbitrio* [*On Free Will*], in *Augustine: Earlier Writings*, trans. J.H.S. Burleigh, vol. 6, Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1953), 1.13.29; quoted in Babcock, "Augustine on Sin and Moral Agency," 36.

is Christ—the perfect image of the Father—who restores our similarity to God.[8] Salvation

comes through God's grace which is always present to us: in the case of baptism we

become incorporated members of the Body of Christ; with forgiveness of sin, our re-

conformation to God's will through reconciliation restores our likeness to God and

constitutes a re-adoption into the divine life lost through sin.[9]

Following his own thought to its logical conclusion, Augustine begins to understand

that willing choices to do the lesser good also have a cumulative effect; they move us

further from conformity to the *imago Dei*, that is, Christ, within us.[10] As a consequence, a

habit (*consuetudo*) of sinning is developed, one which, Augustine is then forced to admit,

has a certain compulsive nature to it threatening our freedom to will the good. Augustine

describes this phenomenon using the phrase: we are "plunged into [the] necessity [of

committing sin]" (*in necessitatem praecipitati sumus*).[11] Repeated sinning constrains our

---

[8]Gerald Bonner, "Augustine's Doctrine of Man: Image of God and Sinner," in *Doctrines of Human Nature, Sin, and Salvation in the Early Church*, vol. 10, *Studies in Early Christianity: A Collection of Scholarly Essays*, ed. Everett Ferguson, (New York, NY: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1993), 78.

[9]Sin is an act both individual and collective, all part of the sin of Adam, the one man. Only by incorporation into the Body of Christ, the one perfect man, who is both similar to us by virtue of his human nature and unlike us by virtue of his divinity, are we redeemed. The Christ event, then, becomes the glorification of the image of God in humankind: his deformation (i.e., becoming man) allows for our reformation—not a return to Adam's primal state, but a move towards a better and higher state (*deificatio*).

[10]In sin, the image of God within us is obscured. In his early writings, Augustine thought of the image of God as "lost"; later, he modified his notion to mean simply "deformed" (i.e., needing of reformation). See ibid., 83.

[11]*Contra Fortunatum*, 22; quoted in Babcock, "Augustine on Sin and Moral Agency," 39.

natural ability to resist evil: this impotence in our moral freedom makes choosing the good

then all the harder, and so our propensity toward sinfulness grows.

Augustine places the first moment of this moral decline back to Adam, who alone

had absolute freedom to choose good from evil; since that time, the influence of sin on

sinning has grown. Thus it is that Augustine comes to formulate the concept of original

sin—even though in contending that we sin "of necessity" (that is, involuntarily participate

in the sin of Adam), Augustine contradicts his earlier assertion that we are truly free to

choose the good. The nexus of the problem for Augustine is that an uncaused evil like

original sin, disassociated as it is directly from Adam's descendants as moral agents, cannot

be posited as coming from God either. Augustine comes to see that far from achieving the

good "with perfect ease," the path to virtue is made all the harder by all our—ultimately

going back to Adam's—previous sinning. The opposing notions of free-will moral virtue

and the human propensity toward evil-doing were never fully resolved in Augustine's

thought.[12]

Perseverance in doing the good, with the grace for carrying on itself a gift from

God, took on greater significance as a virtue when Augustine sought to explain how it

eventuates that grace is refused and evil chosen. In his consideration of the case of the Bad

---

[12]William S. Babcock critiques the Bishop of Hippo in this regard: "What he [Augustine] could not find was that continuity with the dispositions, inclinations, motivations, aims and intentions of the agent that must be present if an act is to count as the agent's own and therefore as an instance of moral agency. In this sense, at least, he did not succeed in casting off his Manichaean past or in finding a strictly moral interpretation of angelic and human evil," Babcock, "Augustine on Sin and Moral Agency," 49.

Angels,[13] Augustine's ultimate resort was to contend that there is no efficient cause for sin, a preexistent evil will, but only a "deficient" one (*causa deficiens*), a turning away from the good which is possible since the angels (and human beings following) do not share God's substance. Although it is as difficult to understand the cause of this turning away as it is to see into the darkness,[14] Augustine is able to maintain nonetheless that God's grace is always the efficient cause of a good will which does the good. Sin, then, does not come from God but arises when, voluntarily and in contradiction to the grace afforded us, we nonetheless desire to choose the lesser good. The breakdown occasioned by sinning still comes across as barely comprehensible given Augustine's belief in the superabundance of God's grace in relation to an absolutely free human will.

The genesis of moral evil ultimately remains only partially explained by Augustine; and as a consequence of this limitation, the task of fashioning a more complete understanding of how and why it is that human beings do in fact choose not to do the good would pass on to future generations to help clarify.

Thomas Aquinas

In the scholastic era, Catholic theologians wrestled with the difficulties of moral choice by looking at the nature of the human act through the prism of conscience. St.

---

[13]St. Augustine, "Of the Creation of Angels and Men and of the Origin of Evil," Book XII, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York, NY: Modern Library, 1950).

[14]The image is Augustine's: see ibid., Book XII, Chapter 7.

Jerome in his fifth-century commentary on the book of Ezechiel had described conscience as

a power in the soul, even employing a neologism, *synderesis*, to give name to the concept.

This text of Jerome's was taken up by Peter Lombard in the twelfth century and

incorporated into his widely read tome *Sentences*, "the primary theological textbook of the

times,"[15] setting the stage for disputatious investigation by medieval theologians into how

the good is chosen. Considered a faculty of the intellect, conscience could not be displaced,

and it operated in all human beings as a watchdog of the soul through the mechanism of

induced guilty feelings of sinfulness which it aroused after evil actions were taken. But

operationally, was conscience connected more to the power of reason (in disclosing

universal principles of morality), or to the affective will, functioning as a kind of natural

appetite drawing us to choose and do the good? Thomas Aquinas sided with a concept of

conscience as "a habit belonging to practical reason by which one knows the first, self-

evident principles of practical moral reasoning."[16] Thus conscience was construed as a sure

guide to applying moral truth to conduct, capable only of being undermined by human

error—and in that occurrence, would it still oblige?

Aquinas was also concerned with influences impeding moral agency that do not

spring from an individual's freedom of will. Like Augustine, Thomas held to the absolute

"voluntariness" of sin, but he also gave weight in his estimation of culpability to those

countervailing cultural influences which can foster an ignorance of moral norms, and so

---

[15]Charles E. Curran, *Directions in Fundamental Moral Theology* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985), 218. The discussion of medieval theology here is largely derived from Curran's chapter in this book entitled, "Conscience."

[16]Ibid., 220.

diminish the voluntary aspect of free action: "Since it is of the nature of sin that it is voluntary, to whatever extent ignorance excuses sin either wholly or in part, to that extent it takes away the voluntariness."[17] As Thomas goes on, however, to parse more finely the limitations on voluntariness, it becomes clear that ignorance alone does not excuse one absolutely from *all* responsibility in sinning.

As a factor in determining culpability, Thomas also takes into account an agent's complicity in fostering ignorance, distinguishing that state from true "invincible ignorance"[18] which is beyond human choice-making and therefore exculpatory. If a person directly chooses to remain ignorant of the facts of a situation, or neglects to make an effort to know, or chooses an action which will ensure ignorance, the individual then becomes responsible for the ignorance, and any consequent evil actions are no longer deemed involuntary, but rather, sinful (*Summa Theologiæ*, I-II, q. 19, a. 6).[19] Although Thomas allows for some degree of excuse in these cases of *voluntary ignorance* (when "the preceding ignorance lessens the voluntary nature of the act"),[20] a person still bears considerable culpability for sinful actions which result from any ignorance which is chosen

---

[17]*De Malo* [*On Evil*], trans. Jean Ostrle (Notre Dame, IL: University of Notre Dame, 1995), q. 3, a. 8; quoted in Gregory Doolan, "The Relation of Culture and Ignorance to Culpability in Thomas Aquinas," *The Thomist* 63 (1999), 106. See also the quotation from *Gaudium et spes* §16 about the excuse of ignorance, footnoted below (no. 98).

[18]Concerning *ignorantia invincibilis*, Doolan notes: "Thomas defines invincible ignorance as that which is unable to be overcome by study," ibid., 109.

[19]*Summa Theologiæ*, trans. Fathers of the English Domincan Province (New York, NY: Christian Classics, 1981).

[20]*De Malo*, q. 3, a. 8; quoted in Doolan, "Culpability in Thomas Aquinas," 108.

either directly or through negligence,[21] since the responsibility of the individual to behave morally cannot itself be disputed.

But what are the things about which one is able and obligated to know, Thomas goes on to ask, since "ignorance of those things a person is not obliged to know is without [i.e., creates no] fault."[22] The answer that he gives places primacy on knowing those effects that directly ensue from an individual's own actions: "Everyone is obliged to know those things by which he is directed in his own acts."[23] Consequences and possible consequences of a person's actions require forethought and moral judgment; any ill effects which might ensue cannot be excused solely by a claim of ignorance.

The Angelic Doctor goes on to argue that there are also universal principles which all human beings must and do know.[24] Natural law provides all human beings with

---

[21]"Thomas did not call the person good who despite striving to know the right followed an erroneous conscience; rather, Thomas argued that such a person is 'excused' from blame," James F. Keenan, S.J., "Can a Wrong Action Be Good? The Development of Theological Opinion on Erroneous Conscience," *Église et Théologie* 24:2 (May 1993), 212.

[22]*De Malo*, q. 3, a. 7; quoted in Doolan, "Culpability in Thomas Aquinas," 110.

[23]Ibid.; quoted in Doolan, "Culpability in Thomas Aquinas," 111. The language is opaque here, but Thomas is concerned to limit culpability for actions in the temporal realm to only what was proper for the individual to know. Elsewhere he avers that all people are required to know and follow the articles of faith, and also that one is obligated to act on one's duty to the state.

[24]This notion that the law of God is available to all interiorly is amply testified to in both the Hebrew Testament, as when the LORD promises, "I will place my law within them, and write it upon their hearts (Jer 31:33), and the Christian Testament, "The demands of the law are written in their hearts while their conscience also bears witness" (Rom 2:15). Cf. Pope John Paul II, *Veritatis splendor*: "It is the 'heart' converted to the Lord and to the love of what is good which is really the source of true judgments of conscience," Pope John Paul II, *The Splendor of Truth: "Veritatis splendor" [VS]: Encyclical Letter Addressed by the Supreme Pontiff Pope John Paul II to All the Bishops of the Catholic Church*

knowledge sufficient to make moral determinations: in our every action "good is to be done and pursued, and evil is to be avoided."[25] Since a human being is a rational animal, any "good" involves more than the mere preservation of one's own life: our natural reason provides us "a natural inclination to know the truth about God, and to live in society."[26] Most of the maxims of the Ten Commandments, for example, are considered by Thomas to be readily and easily apprehensible by all through the use of natural reason contemplating the universal precepts of the natural law.[27] Error can occur, however, when humankind's *practical reason* makes an incorrect application of a universally known and understood principle of the natural law in a particular situation.

Conscience, then, defined by Thomas as "a judgment of reason derived from the natural law,"[28] can and does err. Because knowledge of the details of any specific situation

---

Regarding Certain Fundamental Questions of the Church's Moral Teaching (Boston, MA: St. Paul Books & Media, 1993), §64.

[25]*Summa Theologiæ*, I-II, q. 94, a. 2; quoted in Doolan, "Culpability in Thomas Aquinas," 113.

[26]Ibid.; quoted in Doolan, "Culpability in Thomas Aquinas," 114.

[27]In his own argument that God's commandments are available anteriorly to us in the exercise of our consciences, Cardinal Ratzinger chooses to use the Platonic term, *anamnesis*: "An original memory of the good and true (both are identical) [that] has been implanted in us . . . an inner sense, a capacity to recall," Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, "Conscience and Truth," *Catholic Conscience: Foundation and Formation: Proceedings of the Tenth Bishops' Workshop, Dallas Texas*, ed. Russell E. Smith (Braintree, MA: The Pope John XXIII Medical-Moral Research and Education Center, 1991), 18-20. Later, the future Pope Benedict XVI identifies the locus of sinfulness in a willed ignorance, or better, our conscious refusal to recall God's law: "In the neglect of my being which made me deaf to the internal promptings of the truth," ibid., 23.

[28]*De Veritate* [*On Truth*], trans. Robert W. Mulligan, S.J. (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 1994), q. 17, a. 1, *sed contra* (first series) 1; quoted in Doolan, "Culpability in

is subject to variability, different people can come to varying judgments about the moral

course of action to pursue; these judgments then redound to an individual's personal

culpability—though only negatively, not positively: "conscience is said to bind in so far as

one sins if he does not follow his conscience, but not in the sense that he acts correctly if he

does follow it."[29] Moreover, Thomas notes, fallibility of conscience can also occur because

of "certain obstacles . . . since in some the reason is perverted by passion of evil habit, or an

evil disposition of nature."[30] A little later in the *Summa*, Thomas goes even further,

contending that "the natural law can be blotted out from the human heart, either by evil

persuasions . . . or by vicious customs and corrupt habits."[31] Thus Thomas would explain

evil actions as due to the "accidental"[32] misapplication of universal precepts by an erring

---

Thomas Aquinas," 113. Thomas would seem to be of two minds as to whether the term *conscience* refers to the capacity to judge or to the act of judgment itself. He writes later in Question Seventeen: "It is not customary to have one name for a power, an act, and a habit . . . [therefore] conscience cannot denote a special habit or power, but designates the act itself" (Reply). At the end, though, he writes just the opposite: "Conscience is called the natural power of judgment" (Answers to Difficulties: First Series, 5). Interestingly, Thomas applies the term—as both act and power—to proactive determination of moral action and also to retroactive considered judgment upon actions already taken: "We use the name *conscience* for both of these modes of application." The full text of *De Veritate* [*On Truth*] is available from: http://www.op-stjoseph.org/Students/study/thomas/QDdeVer.htm.

[29]Ibid., q. 17, a. 4; quoted in Keenan, "Can a Wrong Action Be Good?," 211.

[30]*Summa Theologiæ*, I-II, q. 94, a. 4; quoted in Doolan, "Culpability in Thomas Aquinas," 118.

[31]*Summa Theologiæ*, I-II, q. 94, a. 6; quoted ibid., 119.

[32]Thomas uses the term (*per accidens*) in a technical sense: it refers to aspects of reality which exist in relation to a particular instance or situation (vs. "universal"); the use of the idea is analogous to Rahner's distinction between "categorical" and "transcendental." See Brian V. Johnstone, "Conscience and Error," *Conscience: Readings in Moral Theology No. 14*, ed. Charles E. Curran (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 2004), 163-64.

conscience, the fault of which, in turn, oftentimes derives from the damaging overlay of past sins which result in misjudgment.

But any cultural blindness itself or other mitigating influences are not to be considered totally determinative, for they always exists in relation to universal principles which are absolute. Thus, in any particular action, a moral agent is required to consider *both* the universal principles divined from the natural law and particular circumstances.[33] Where the two are in conflict, Thomas would say, the principles of natural law override; and so, in order to avoid sin, one's conscience and actions must follow the guide of natural reason. In other words, particular judgments made in relation to culturally imposed, widely accepted norms are always to be evaluated in light of our more foundational knowledge of God's true, universal principles, something everyone is obliged (and able) to know. One can never use the excuse of cultural ignorance—thus exculpating oneself—since one can, and always does know universal principles of right action, distinguished as "first principles" or "proximate conclusions".[34] In moral agency, a person's conscience can oblige action in

---

[33] In terms of the practice of virtue, those particular circumstances also include consideration of any inculcated precepts or attitudes, and the possible effects on decision-making which might ensue under the sway of them. The influence of bias on moral judgment was of particular interest to Bernard Lonergan; see his *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 230-31, 240-42.

[34] That we often choose to be blinded from the truth through willful denial of what we know to be right is a topic still current. "It [the truth of God] is not seen because man [*sic*] does not want to see it. The 'no' of the will which hinders recognition is guilt. The fact that the signal lamp does not shine is the consequence of a deliberate looking away from that which we do not wish to see," Ratzinger, "Conscience and Truth," 12-13. The metaphor used here of intentional self-blindness runs parallel to the idea of a self-imposed deafness to recalling the truth of God's law (*anamnesis*) noted in Ratzinger's prior quotation from this article (footnote no. 27 above). Choosing not to see the light is apparently a popular image in Catholic theological discourse; see use of the metaphor in

opposition to culturally held norms if they do not conform to God's will.[35] One's culpability

in any particular instance—though mitigated to some degree by the involuntariness of

culturally imposed, perverse customs—still holds for those actions taken which a person

knows to be contrary to what is true, but willfully chooses to ignore.[36] The influence of

cultural ignorance on individual conscience will become a major problem area of discussion

later on in the application of moral responsibility to social sin.

Transition to the Modern Era

Those who developed the concept of moral agency after Thomas Aquinas continued

to struggle with the problem of how best to take into account the rightness of a performed

---

both Vatican II's *Gaudium et spes* §16 and Pope John Paul II's *Veritatis splendor* §63 (footnote in this chapter no. 98 below).

[35]Much the same point is made in a more personalistic way by Hannah Arendt in her consideration of the morality of those who were brave enough to oppose Hitler: "If you examine the few, the very few, who in the moral collapse of Nazi Germany remained completely intact and free of all guilt, . . . they never doubted that crimes remained crimes even if legalized by the government, and that it was better not to participate in these crimes under any circumstances. . . . Hence, their conscience, if that is what it was, had no obligatory character, it said, 'This I *can't* do,' rather than, "This I *ought* not to do,'" Hannah Arendt, "Some Questions of Moral Philosophy," in *Responsibility and Judgment*, edited and with an introduction by Jerome Kahn (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 2003), 78.

[36]"According to Thomas, the false conscience inculcated by cultural mores does not excuse from sin altogether. Even when custom does prevail over an individual's choices, the moral agent nonetheless remains responsible for his individual acts," Doolan, "Culpability in Thomas Aquinas," 124. This consideration is also germane in assessing accountability for seminal modern events such as the Holocaust, as will be discussed later.

action in relation to the goodness of the moral agent's motivation in taking the action.[37]

While aiming for goodness may not always achieve rightness, motivation to "do the right

thing" has always been considered a prerequisite first step. The development of probabilism

in the seventeenth century attempted to parse moral obligation along the lines of

determining which ethical options could be argued as probably right, that is, right at least to

some degree according to some theologians.[38] Many later moral theologians, starting with

Alphonsus Liguori and continuing to the present time, would argue that the moral status of

an act could actually be altered as a consequence of being the product of an erroneous

conscience.[39] According to St. Alphonsus, if a person were to follow false reasoning in

making a decision, that action could be considered good, at least in the sense and to the

extent that the person would have been trying to interpret natural law by an informing

conscience.[40] Although the ensuing act would still not be good *in se*, the moral condition of

the agent bore considerable weight in any subsequent determination of accountability.[41]

---

[37]This important distinction erupted in the Middle Ages in the bitter dispute between Bernard of Clairvaux, who maintained that the goodness of an action should be judged independent of its motivation, and Peter Abelard, who held that motivation alone should determine the goodness of an action; see Keenan, "Can a Wrong Action Be Good?," 209-10.

[38]Ibid., 212-13.

[39]For this analysis I am indebted to Johnstone, "Conscience and Error," 165-67.

[40]"Here Alphonsus considered that he was taking to its logical conclusion the basic position of St. Thomas, namely, that the act is to be judged virtuous or vicious according to the good as known (*bonum apprehensum*) to which the will is directed, and not according to the material object of the act," ibid., 165-66.

[41]No less an authority than a dean at The Catholic University of America, would later write that even if a person acted out of an erroneous conscience, "God will reward him

This distinction in moral analysis between act and agent, especially in terms of motivation or intention, has continued to be an unsettled matter for ongoing disputation. In fact, reestablishing a normative basis for evaluating human actions independent of consideration of the individual moral agent was to be one of the principal points taken up by Pope John Paul II in his encyclical *Veritatis splendor* (1993). There it is argued, subjective conscience, a personalist stance, does not obviate the intrinsic morality of certain actions, an objectivist stance.[42] John Paul II sees value in the earnest exercise of conscience itself, even when exercised in cases of inculpable invincible ignorance: "Conscience does not lose its dignity, because even when it directs us to act in a way not in conformity with the objective moral order, it continues to speak in the name of that truth about the good which the subject is called to seek sincerely" (*VS* §62). In considering the imperfection of the operation of conscience, Brian Johnstone distinguishes between the "truth about the status of the act, and a distinct affirmation of truth about the moral condition of the person. . . .

---

for sincerely following his conscience," Francis J. Connell, *Outlines of Moral Theology*, Milwaukee, WI: Bruce Publishing Company, 1953, 39; quoted in Keenan, "Can a Wrong Action Be Good?," 214. Hannah Arendt would likely not be so sanguine about the absolute virtue of following one's conscience; she writes about Adolf Eichmann, the Nazi leader who arranged for the transportation of millions to death camps during the Second World War: "He was not what he called an *innerer Schweinehund*, a dirty bastard in the depths of his heart; and as for his conscience, he remembered perfectly well that he would have had a bad conscience only if he had not done what he been ordered to do—to ship millions of men, women, and children to their death with great zeal and the most meticulous care," Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (New York, NY: Viking Press, 1963), 25.

[42]Johnstone points out, however, that as a bottom line, "The encyclical itself (*VS* §64) identifies the 'heart' converted to the Lord as the basis of true judgments of conscience" (see footnote no. 24 above). Moreover, he opines, one should not term "subjective" those moral norms which "concern the objective reality of the subject's moral orientation and relationship to God," Johnstone, "Conscience and Error," 170.

The model of moral truth which operates in the first case is that of conformity to the

objective order, while in the second case the model is that of correspondence to right

striving."[43] In sum, it is hard to go back to the world before the modern "turn to the self"

and argue that moral agency *only* involves accordance of action to a metaphysical

understanding of God's will: "Contemporary moral theologians have taught us to look not

only at the conformity of acts to the ontological order, but [also] to the goodness (or

badness) of persons, which is interpreted in terms of right striving."[44]

Modern Theological Developments

The "Person as Subject": A New Focus After the Second Vatican Council

In present-day moral theology, the moral act is not considered apart from the person

who is seen as both agent of the action and subject of its ethical effects.[45] The attitudes and

---

[43]Brian V. Johnstone, "Erroneous Conscience in Veritatis Splendor and the Theological Tradition," in *The Splendor of Accuracy: An Examination of the Assertions Made in Veritatis Splendor*, ed. Joseph A. Selling and Jan Jans (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 129.

[44]Johnstone, "Conscience and Error," 171. James Keenan would appear to agree with Johnstone; at the end of his article Keenan concludes: "Badness is the failure to strive *as much as one can* for the right. The failure to attain the right does not result necessarily from a failure to strive"; Keenan, "Can a Wrong Action Be Good?," 217.

[45]"Moral theology can no longer consider the action apart from the person who places the action," Charles Curran, *A New Look at Christian Morality; Christian Morality Today, II* (Notre Dame, IN: Fides, 1968), 203. This "novel" idea that the act shapes our character is embedded epistemologically in the philosophy of George H. Mead. Maurice Natanson finds Mead making just this point in an essay from 1922 ("A Behavioristic

virtues or vices of the person are looked upon as the "permanent features" of the agent, whose discrete "transitory actions," in turn, reflect but also influence these inner dispositions. Even before the Second Vatican Council, moral theologians reviving the Thomistic tradition of virtue theory began to place greater emphasis on the efficacy of God's grace in disposing an individual to do the good and so promote the process of conversion over time: moral acts create the good person as much as the moral person creates good acts.[46]

In an analysis of the christological underpinnings for a new understanding of the person as both moral agent and subject, Charles Curran accounts the influence of contemporary christologies "from below," that is, those understandings of Christ's redemption which begin with the advent of the *person* of Jesus, his life, death and resurrection[47]: "The shift to a Christology from below has focused attention on the concept of discipleship and its implications for understanding the moral life of the Christian

---

Account of the Significant Symbol"): "The causal effect of the living organisms on their environment in creating objects is as genuine as the effect of the environment upon the living organism"; Maurice Natanson, *The Social Dynamics of George H. Mead* (The Hague, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973), 86.

[46] Brian V. Johnstone expounds this very point in his careful analysis of Pope John Paul II's encyclical, *Veritatis splendor*: "The personal moral self does not stand as unformed freedom before an imposed and constricting law. Rather the self is formed and oriented by 'virtuous attitudes' [*VS* §64] towards the true good . . . Thus the moral life is construed as a continuous movement towards the good, or as a 'continuous conversion' [*VS* §64]," Johnstone, "Erroneous Conscience in Veritatis Splendor," 123.

[47]This distinction in terminology—the historical event of Jesus forging an ascending understanding of Christ "from below," distinguished from a metaphysical, descending christology "from above"—is developed in Karl Rahner, "Two Basic Types of Christology," *Theological Investigations* XXIII, 213-23 (New York, NY: Seabury Press, 1975).

believer."[48] He notes that the term for "justice" in the gospels (δικαιοσύνη, *dikaiosunē*)

refers to both doing righteous deeds, e.g., acts of charity, and being in or restoring right

relationship with God.[49] Thus Curran argues, relationality—to God and neighbor,

especially the poor to whom the Good News is preached—not a disembodied deontology

"from above" is the surest basis for constructing evangelical moral behavior.[50] This move to

an incarnated normative morality shifts the discussion of moral agency from that of an

exclusively intellectual or abstract (deontological) process to a humanistic, affective (viz.,

relational) one.

The person of Jesus of Nazareth, understood in a christology from below, embodies

not only moral action as good, but equally importantly, moral *character* as good: one which

displays virtue marked by a depth of commitment.[51] Jesus' solidarity with the poor—even

to the point of death—compasses moral agency in relational terms. In this understanding,

---

[48]Charles E. Curran, "The Person as Moral Agent and Subject in the Light of Contemporary Christology," in *Called to Love: Towards a Contemporary Christian Ethic*, ed. Francis A. Eigo (Philadelphia, PA: Villanova University, 1985), 25.

[49]Ibid., 26.

[50]In the same vein, James Gaffney argues convincingly for the inseparability of moral, normative reasoning from parenetic, ethical discourse based on the appeal of the human character of Jesus in: "On Parenesis and Fundamental Moral Theology," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 11 (Spr 1983), 23-34.

[51]Interestingly enough however, Elizabeth Johnson is able to make an equally persuasive case for a christology from above as leading inexorably to concrete actions of justice; in her commentary on the encyclical *Redemptor hominis*, she notes appreciation of Pope John Paul II's elegant reflection on the dignity of each human which results from our being redeemed by the incarnated Son of God "from above." See S. Elizabeth Johnson, CSJ, "Christology and Social Justice: John Paul II and the American Bishops," *Chicago Studies* 26 (Aug 1987), 157-60.

to "put on the new self" (Eph 4:24), though marked in a special way at baptism, is a continual process of striving to become true disciples of Christ, a process of ongoing conversion. This "longer view" of moral agency emphasizes the fullness of one's moral life over time rather than focusing solely on whether a particular, discrete action is of and by itself good.[52]

Such a expanded perspective does not depreciate the importance of right actions; in fact, quite the opposite: concrete moral deeds on behalf of the poor and oppressed become all the more necessary as an authentication of the preached Good News by the converted agent.[53] The reign of God, announced in the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus, has not come to complete fulfillment yet. Nonetheless, that promise is substantiated by our works of peace and justice which are the hallmarks of that reign: discipleship leads to the fulfillment of God's will being done "on earth as it is heaven." As God has come to us in our abject need and delivered "us from evil" through the redemption of Jesus Christ, so too must we come to the deliverance of others, especially those in greatest need. In this new

[52]"Deepening the relationships with God, neighbor, world, and self and the virtues which direct these relationships constitutes the growth and continual conversion of the person," Curran, "The Person as Moral Agent," 36. Norbert Rigali makes much the same point in his appraisal of the new and dynamic direction of post-Vatican II morality: "In the light of the dawning new age [of historical consciousness] in the Church, it is possible to see the new moral theology as the beginnings of a long, gradual process that will eventually yield a Christian ethic based on a contemporary understanding of the human person as a creative being, called to bring into being relations of justice and love throughout the world," Norbert J. Rigali, "The Moral Act," *Horizons* 10:2 (Fall 1983), 264.

[53]This very point is expressed in the 1971 Synod of Bishops' statement: "Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation," Synodus Episcoporum, *Justice in the World*, §6, 289.

focus, personal responsibility is demonstrated in the actions of the moral agent which, in turn, reconstitute the person as a moral subject.[54] Righteous deeds performed by the individual are deemed good not only by virtue of their conformity to divine law, but also because they build up the Body of Christ, the church, in an ongoing manifestation of the same relationality embodied by the son of God who became one of us so that we might "come to share in the divine nature" (2 Pt 1:4).

Fundamental Option

Another theological development of the modern era that bears on consideration of the moral agent is the concept of fundamental option: an understanding of moral agency as outward-reaching ("horizontal"), one which emphasizes responsible relations among God's people as reflective of an individual's inner ("vertical") relationship with God. The degree to which we are open to God's grace and the fullness with which we strive to follow "the way" of Jesus Christ become the measure of our moral stature; our individual actions derive from, confirm, and help develop who it is that we are and have become in relation to God. These theological notions "in the air" around the time of the Second Vatican Council

---

[54]The Danish philosopher, Søren Kierkegaard, uses the expression, to "choose oneself," to characterize the complex process by which the self-conscious agent integrates the dynamics of personal self-understanding into individual morality. See Virginia L. Warren's analysis of Kierkegaard's exposition of the dilemma posed by the necessity of mutually exclusive alternatives in making ethical decisions (as presented in his classic volume, *Either/Or*), in "A Kierkegaardian Approach to Moral Philosophy: The Process of Moral Decision-Making," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 10:2 (Fall 1982), 221-37.

coalesced right after the council into a new and controversial topic for discourse in Catholic

moral theology, fundamental option.

In Karl Rahner's terminology, our transcendental freedom, our ability to respond to

God's unconditioned and free self-gift, i.e., our core freedom to determine the basic

orientation of our lives as subjects, is expressed in our categorical acts as free agents in

history; in these acts we learn about both ourselves as subjects and the world as reality.[55] It

is the involvement of the self in the action, the disposition of the subject in the act (that is,

the willing giving-over of the self to the action at a fundamental level), that determines who

we are in the eyes of God: our character develops along the lines of—and our soul's

salvation depends on—how we live out our response to God's grace.[56] Thus, our

goodness, our ability to love, grows in conjunction with the expansion of our acts of

charity, our acts of love; that is why, for Rahner, the development of virtue is as much a

---

[55]"Basically freedom is not the capacity to choose any object or mode of conduct, but the freedom of self-understanding of saying yes or no to oneself, the possibility of deciding for or against oneself which corresponds to the knowing subjectivity of man [*sic*]. Freedom is never a mere choice between individual objects, but it is the self-realization of man who makes a choice. . . . it is either a radical self-realization or self-refusal with regard to God," Karl Rahner, "Grace in Freedom," trans. Hilda Graef, (New York, NY: Herder Company, 1982), 212-13; quoted in Hormis Mynatty, "Fundamental Option and the Horizon of Moral Reflection," in *Moral Theology Today: Trends and Issues*, ed. Bosco Puthur (Alwaye, Kerala: Pontifical Institute Publications, 1991), 28.

[56]Although largely critical of the concept of fundamental option in his encyclical *Veritatis splendor*, Pope John Paul II would seem to concede the point made above when he writes: "It has been rightly pointed out that freedom is not only the choice for one or another particular action; it is also, within that choice, a decision about oneself and a setting of one's own life for or against the Good, for or against the Truth, and ultimately for or against God" [*VS* §63].

work of self-love as it is a manifestation of love of neighbor.[57] Our actions are not just what we do: they also reflect a fundamental choosing in who we want to be.

The term *fundamental option* or *basic choice* (Rahner's *Grundentscheidung*) designates the wholehearted willingness—or not—of a person to surrender the self to, i.e., accept, God. Our morality resides at the fundamental level of choosing our response to the grace of God. This disposition or stance is strengthened or weakened, that is expressed in and mediated, by the specific acts that we freely commit.[58] Indeed, the very morality of our actions is established by the fact and to the degree that they evince our fundamental option for God and love of God's ways: our potential for goodness (for it is only a potential) is realized in the act.[59]

---

[57]See Karl Rahner, "Reflections on the Unity of Love of Neighbour and the Love of God," in *Theological Investigations* VI, 231-49 (New York, NY: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1982). Brian Linnane mentions an important point to keep in mind here, that transcendental freedom is not present equally in all acts but that moral goodness is most saliently achieved in categorical acts of love of neighbor: "Rahner's discussion of the unity of love of neighbor and love of God indicates that there is a hierarchy of moral virtues and it is *caritas* that has pride of place," Brian F. Linnane, S.J., "Categorical and Transcendental Experience in Rahner's Theology: Implications for Ethics," *Philosophy & Theology* 10:1 (1997), 212.

[58]Rahner considers the fundamental option simply the expression or ratification by the individual of the already existent gift to humankind of orientation to the divine, the "supernatural *existentiell*": the possibility for reception of God's grace that is inherent in human nature.

[59]Louis Monden explains the nature of this moral decision-making thus: "The choice among the many objects offers an infinite number of possibilities; the fundamental option is made between a 'yes' and a 'no' in which man [*sic*], as a spirit, unconditionally commits or refuses himself. That option always amounts to letting oneself go: either yielding to a 'becoming,' to a growing towards a more perfect self-realization, or falling back on an already acquired self-possession, rejecting the advance in self-realization and the new risks," Monden, *Sin, Liberty and Law*, 31.

In this scheme, virtue may be expressed in or achieved by charitable deeds, but fundamentally it *belongs* to the nature of the (graced) person. As the person develops, so too does her or his moral life: the values expressed by our basic choice, in turn, shape the development of our fundamental option in an evolving, organic way.[60] It is in this dynamic, the "layers of choosing over the course of a life,"[61] that a new understanding of moral responsibility takes hold: the estimation of personal morality in sinning is not decided—at least not exclusively—in the instance of any single, particular act, but is, rather, determined by the aggregate of choices taken over (and extending beyond any one moment in) time. Such a "cumulative" interpretation of moral agency represents a marked departure from the Tridentine notion of morality wherein sinfulness fully resides in distinct and discontinuous moral actions which are judged contrary to easily apprehensible moral norms.[62]

---

[60]William Cosgrave writes: "The person's basic stance will express itself in what he does in particular situations, so that his specific choices will be realisations and concretisations of his fundamental direction as a person. And conversely, these particular actions will strengthen and deepen the person's basic choice and stance and make them more dominant in and over his life as a moral subject," William Cosgrave, "Basic Choice and Basic Stance—Explaining the Fundamental Option," *The Furrow* 35 (Aug 1984), 511. This same interplay of act and disposition is on display in *The Confessions* (Book II, 4), when Augustine credits his single act of stripping a pear tree of all its fruit as the beginning of his personal fall from grace because it was done in full malice ("our only pleasure in doing it was that it was forbidden"); the act epitomized his turning from God as the source of happiness toward attachment to creatures, a process of enslavement to sin that was to perdure for years. See Frederick L. Miller, "The Fundamental Option in the Thought of St. Augustine," *The Downside Review* 95 (Oct 1977), 276-77.

[61]Larry May, *Sharing Responsibility* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 17.

[62]Pope John Paul II echoes this kind of thinking when he writes: "Once the moral species of an action prohibited by a universal rule is concretely recognized, the only morally good act is that of obeying the moral law and of refraining from the action which it forbids" (*VS* §67).

The concept of fundamental option has become subject to the criticisms that it

separates the person from the act to too great an extent,[63] and also that it posits the

attributes of goodness or badness solely onto the subject to the detriment of ascribing clear

moral judgments to the actions themselves taken by individuals.[64] The matter bears

importance in the consideration of both the role of conscience and the voluntariness of sin,

as it is these notions which delineate the connection of the individual directly to moral

action. David Coffey, in his keen defense of Karl Rahner's formulation of fundamental

option, argues that although a person's basic choice is not open to scrutiny in the same way

as his or her conduct is, individuals still bears a vital obligation to discern properly the moral

way of living through thoughtful contemplation of their actions; Coffey quotes Rahner:

> A person never knows with absolute certainty whether the objectively guilty character
> of his actions, which he can perhaps establish unambiguously, is the objectification of a
> real and original decision of freedom saying "no" to God, or whether it is more in the
> nature of a manipulation which has been imposed upon him and which he endures, and

---

[63]John Paul II writes: "To separate the fundamental option from concrete kinds of
behavior means to contradict the substantial integrity or personal unity of the moral agent in
his body and in his soul. . . . In point of fact, the morality of human acts is not deduced only
from one's intention, orientation or fundamental option, understood as an intention devoid
of a clearly determined binding content or as an intention with no corresponding positive
effort to fulfil the different obligations of the moral life. Judgments about morality cannot
be made without taking into consideration whether or not the deliberate choice of a specific
kind of behavior is in conformity with the dignity and integral vocation of the human
person"; ibid.

[64]Pope John Paul II raises such objection to an overemphasis on subjectivity in
morality: "A distinction thus comes to be introduced (by some theologians) between the
fundamental option and the deliberate choices of a concrete kind of behavior. In some
authors this division tends to become a separation, when they expressly limit moral 'good'
and 'evil' to the transcendental dimension proper to the fundamental option, and describe as
'right' or 'wrong' the choices of particular 'innerworldly' kinds of behavior: those, in other
words, concerning man's relationship with himself, with others and with the material world"
(*VS* §65).

which has about it the character of necessity. . . . We can never know with ultimate certainty whether we really are sinners.[65]

Rather than provide a cover for sinful actions, a proper understanding of fundamental option—with its imperative of personal responsibility for moral development—actually *increases* an individual's need for intellectual discernment and spiritual growth, according to Coffey's interpretation.[66] That personal estimation must also take into account those forces of "manipulation" which are "imposed" on us and have "the character of necessity" to them that diminish our freedom.[67] Such extenuations may mitigate to a certain degree our culpability for actions taken, even those which openly appear to be lapses in charity—only God can judge. The final moral determination would depend most, then, on the degree to which our actions conform to and express our self-disposition to the divine offer of grace: our fundamental option.[68]

---

[65]Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, (New York, NY: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1998), 104; quoted in David Coffey, "Rahner's Theology of Fundamental Option," *Philosophy & Theology* 10:1 (1997), 272.

[66]Rahner, himself, urged the practice of "discernment of spirits" found in *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius* as a most reliable means to bolster one's conscience.

[67]Coffey points to the 1983 reform in the code of canon law, which allowed for granting ecclesiastical funeral rites to casualties of suicide and established an expansion of legitimate reasons for granting annulments, as an example of the church's increased recognition that acts committed under the sway of particular and powerful personal forces can diminish the supposed (and necessary) full knowledge and consent of the will.

[68]"The particular decision can be evaluated accurately and judged only when seen in relation to the fundamental life's orientation and basic attitude towards God on the part of the individual subject," Eugene J. Cooper, "The Fundamental Option," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 34:4 (1972), 384. Cooper later quotes Louis Janssens on the same point: "Les choix particuliers sont donc des structures partielles qui ne se comprennent et ne s'interprètent qu'en fonction du choix fondamental [Specific choices are, then, partial

Collective Agency

In addition to an expanded subjective or personalist dimension in moral theology, there has also developed since the time of the Second Vatican Council enlargement of the concept of moral agency to encompass not just the individual alone, but also the larger social organization of which the person is a part. Embedded into the social context, a human being becomes more than a solipsistic moral agent: society and the cultural milieu in this understanding are seen to exist in an organic, dynamic, and normative relationship with the individual. So integral is the connection between self and society that a person may still be held accountable for morally deficient communal actions—such as is particularly the case with the large-scale phenomenon of social sin—even though such actions are beyond the capacity of any one individual operating singly either to effect or to solve.

Nineteenth- and twentieth-century developments in philosophical social theory set up new metaphysical parameters for the consideration of communities as organic wholes. For that collectivity known as the church, the novel contributions of behaviorism and social phenomenology have created challenges, if not problems: once a collectivity is assumed into the moral equation, a new dynamic takes holds regarding how the individual is judged in relation to and along with consociate group members.[69] A parallel and concomitant modern

structures which cannot be understood or interpreted except in relation to the fundamental option]," Louis Janssens, *Liberté de conscience et liberté religieuese*, Paris: Desclée de Brouwer (1964), 85; quoted in ibid., 389.

[69]Such had not been true with the Tridentine understanding of sin in which culpability, in particular, is considered a matter pertaining to the individual in atomistic isolation.

interest involves appraisal of how the individual functions as part of the group (the field of social psychology), a concern critical to the determination of certain key aspects of moral agency such as responsibility, negligence, blameworthiness, and the like.

This socially situated view of human activity has profound implications for moral theory. Margaret Gilbert, for example, argues for the concept of "group existence," a way of being that is established by "plural subjects," collectivities whose readiness to operate in concert constitutes them as a distinct category of agent—one which, then, bears a shared responsibility for the group actions taken. The existence of these pluralities is established by means of a conscious, overt decision on the part of the individuals comprising the group: "To become a member of a plural subject one must openly express a willingness to do so, and it must become common knowledge among those concerned that each of them has done this."[70] Once established though, groups may proceed to act by dint of only tacit approval from the individual who must, in fact, cede full personal control over actions to the group: "He [*sic*] must give over his will to the group—in order to constitute the group . . . this entails taking on or accepting a set of responsibilities and rights: it involves recognizing a new set of constraints on one's behavior."[71] Secondarily, this self-incorporation of the person into the community provides a basis for the development of collective or shared beliefs established, according to Gilbert, by the processes of joint acceptance of premises (or reasons for action) and mutual agreement on decisions to be taken.[72] Whether the

---

[70]Margaret Gilbert, *On Social Facts* (London: Routledge Press, 1989), 205.

[71]Ibid., 410-11.

[72]Ibid., 306-14.

conventions of social cooperation are freely chosen or whether they represent a type of

coercion, as well as the degree to which a person gives up individual responsibility—and

thus blameworthiness—by consenting to the coordinated actions of the group, are ethical

matters still not fully resolved.[73]

Although collective moral agency is a controverted term, Larry May will

nonetheless ascribe this concept to institutions if it is shown, explains James A. Donahue,

that "the structure of the group can facilitate joint action and common interest . . . even

though no decision-making structure for the group exists."[74] Rather than arguing for the

existence of a kind of "collective individualism," May proposes that the roles and patterns

---

[73]Though subject to the influences of "group-think," the individual is still not off the hook in terms of being accountable for personal moral behavior. Hannah Arendt's stinging and mournful portrait of Adolf Eichmann as the epitome of the "banality of evil" is germane here: "Eichmann was not Iago. . . . Except for an extraordinary diligence in looking out for his personal advancement, he had no motives at all. . . . He *merely*, to put the matter colloquially, *never realized what he was doing*. . . . He was not stupid. It was sheer thoughtlessness . . . that predisposed him to become one of the greatest criminals of that period. . . . That such remoteness from reality and such thoughtlessness can wreak more havoc than all the evil instincts taken together, which, perhaps, are inherent in [humans]—that was, in fact, the lesson one could learn in Jerusalem . . . the strange interdependence of thoughtlessness and evil," Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 54. This quotation was abridged by Jennifer L. Geddes who goes on to defend Arendt's use of the idea of the banality of evil: "Banal evil is a new form of evil in the modern world. . . . Implicit in this idea is the suggestion that evil has many forms, that these forms may change over time . . . Arendt's thesis points to an understanding of evil as particular, evolving, and nonessentialist. . . . Her method reveals the importance of attending to the particular and of continually attending to the possibility of new forms evil," Jennifer L. Geddes, "Banal Evil and Useless Knowledge: Hannah Arendt and Charlotte Delbo on Evil after the Holocaust," in *The Double Binds of Ethics after the Holocaust: Salvaging the Fragments*, ed. Jennifer L. Geddes, et al. (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 124-25.

[74]James A. Donahue, "Ethics and Institutions: A Review Essay," *Religious Studies Review* 17:1 (Jan 1991), 26. May's attribution of responsibility to groups is presented most extensively in his volume, *The Morality of Groups: Collective Responsibility, Group-Based Harm, and Corporate Rights* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987).

of relationship of individuals within a collectivity be considered sufficient rationale for establishing institutional accountability. Like Gilbert, May argues that solidarity in purpose and unity of action are the bases on which to determine matters of group agency and collective responsibility.

Taking a step down from the concept of collective agency itself, May also argues for degrees of moral accountability within groups in his aptly titled work, *Sharing Responsibility*. There May asserts that individuals in a group share at least partial responsibility for any harms caused—or not prevented—that occur as a result of corporate action or inaction. The ascription of responsibility for those collective actions which result in social sin would appear even clearer: "In advanced technological societies, much greater evil is done by groups of persons than by discrete individual persons."[75] Interrelated, too, are the remedies for social ills; so, a lively sense of shared moral responsibility among "group members will negate the tendency to ignore the most serious evils, those which can only be thwarted by the collective efforts of communities."[76]

Of particular interest is May's contention that social membership by and of itself necessarily implicates the individual in the consequences of group action. Shared attitudes and voluntary affiliations can influence the *likelihood* of certain harmful actions being taken, even if those acts themselves are perpetrated by others; so, "It makes sense to speak of shared agency when a climate of attitudes is created in a community that makes a given act

---

[75]Larry May, *Sharing Responsibility*, 53.

[76]Ibid., 161-62.

more likely to occur."[77] May posits the focal point of an individual's moral responsibility on the maintenance of the attitudes themselves; a person is morally negligent if, knowing of their harm-causing potential, she or he has "failed to take steps to prevent the engendering of the attitude."[78] Attitudes allow for actions, and culpability cannot be separated out from the climate that individuals allow collectivities to engender.

Shared moral responsibility also occurs in the case of collective inaction when members of a group, who could have prevented a harm from occurring, do nothing. Failure to act is particularly blameworthy when the group itself has done something to bring about the harm in the first place[79] (e.g., the 2003 U.S.-led preemptive war in Iraq). In sum, May extends our responsibility for harm to others to include our self-indulgent attitudes, questionable group affiliations, and lax moral-character traits—over which we do have command and do make decisions—even if our own private actions do no direct injury themselves. May's "social existentialism" (his term) looks at the matrix of relations participated in by the person—not just the individual acts taken—and so, explains Margaret

---

[77]Ibid., 53. An example would be when racist attitudes, common to a culture, set the stage for violence against a member of the minority: even the individual who does not perform any direct harmful action may share in the responsibility for the injurious conduct done by other members of the community because of the racist attitudes that he or she allows to exist unchallenged—though the "amount" of culpability would be difficult to measure here.

[78]Ibid., 29. May argues in part 3 of his book entitled "Metaphysical Guilt and Moral Taint," that blameworthiness is mitigated to a degree when a moral agent distances herself or himself from a harm-causing group action by condemning it or ending affiliation with the group.

[79]Ibid., 118.

Walker, "Gears moral responsibility into voluntary choice, rather than [into issues of] direct causality or full control."[80]

Lest all this pondering of collective agency be considered mere abstraction, the event of the Holocaust in modern history, a paradigm of sin in all its modes, brings to the fore the issues of collective moral responsibility in harrowing reality.[81] Of special interest is the matter of collusion: how so many "good Germans" allowed the evil by which millions suffered (an archetypal sin of omission). Even more vexing, in terms of morality, is the problem of trying to portion out accountability for the Holocaust: what happened is obviously sinful, and yet, who bears the guilt?[82] Even bringing to the bar of justice certain perpetrators such as Adolf Eichmann does not adequately account for such large-scale

---

[80]Margaret Walker, "Geographies of Responsibility," *Hastings Center Report* 27:1 (Jan-Feb 1997), 40.

[81]Although words adequate to describing the radical evil of the Holocaust fall short, the Shoah can serve as a focal point for the discussion of collective agency both here and again in the final chapter of this dissertation when voices from outside the magisterium of the church are invoked to weigh in on some of the unresolved issues of sin and moral agency which will have been raised along the way.

[82]Although the German Protestant church as a whole resisted the notion of collective guilt for the crimes of the Nazis, an interesting admission of complicity, the so-called "Stuttgart Confession of Guilt," was fashioned after the war and signed by representatives of twelve influential church leaders at an ecumenical meeting, the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), at St. Mark's Church in Stuttgart on 19 October 1945. An important section of the text reads: "With great pain we say: By us infinite wrong was brought over many peoples and countries. That which we often testified to in our communities, we express now in the name of the whole church: We did fight for long years in the name of Jesus Christ against the mentality that found its awful expression in the National Socialist regime of violence; but we accuse ourselves for not standing to our beliefs more courageously, for not praying more faithfully, for not believing more joyously, and for not loving more ardently." [Unofficial translation by Harold Marcuse, available at: http://www.history.ucsb.edu/faculty/marcuse/projects/niem/StuttgartDeclaration.htm.]

crime which reasonably can only be understood as the product of collective action. The

matter of collusion—and the moral decision-making which attends it—become paramount

in trying to understand the Holocaust; and it is that topic which represents a moral sticking

point for thinkers such as Hannah Arendt who comes to conclude that "the true opposite of

good is not evil or crime . . . [but] mere indifference."[83] If Arendt is right, a studied

indifference can mark the boundaries of moral agency as incisively as any personal or

collective actions, a topic that will be explored in the final chapter of this dissertation.

The Psychology of Moral Decision-Making

The dynamic interrelationship of the self and the social milieu in terms of decision-

making has, in the modern era, come under the scrutiny of the behavioral sciences as well.

The "world out there"—once considered an objective reality—is, in the purview of

phenomenological ontology, now understood to be in large part a "creation" of the

individual. A pioneer in this field is the American social philosopher George H. Mead;

Maurice Natanson explains Mead's ideas on the construction of reality thus: "The meaning

and content of an object or event are given in a present or reconstructed in a present.

Whatever meanings are ascribed to events are, by the very fact of ascription, related to

individuals for whom those events are events charged with significance. . . . The individual

---

[83]Hannah Arendt, *Reflections on Literature and Culture*, ed. Susannah Young-ah Gottlieb (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), 278; quoted in Karin A. Fry, *Arendt: A Guide for the Perplexed* (New York, NY: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2009), 111.

constitutes experience, therefore, in so far as he [*sic*] is the locus of meaning-endowment. . .

. The individual who constitutes experience is a part of that experience, and he arises in the

world which existed before him and which will exist after him."[84]

What is true for the individual is also true for the society which endows meaning

back to the individual. For Mead, the dynamic of interrelatedness existing between the

person and the social environment creates a new form of agency which he termed

"sociality":

> I wish, however, to restrict the social act to the class of acts which involve the co-operation of more than one individual, and whose object as defined by the act . . . is a social object. I mean by a social object one that answers to all the parts of the complex act, though these parts are found in the conduct of different individuals. The objective of the acts is then found in the life-process of the group, not in those of the separate individuals alone.[85]

The key point here is that "the parts of the complex act" are distributed among the various

members of a collectivity, thus bringing to the fore consideration of the exact nature of the

relationship between an individual's conscious decisions and the actions taken by the society

as a whole.

A more contemporary perspective relating to the voluntariness of moral actions has

been explored by the psychologist Albert Bandura in his application of social cognitive

theory to moral agency.[86] Rather than view the moral individual as a person responding

---

[84]Maurice Natanson, *The Social Dynamics of George H. Mead*, 86.

[85]George H. Mead, *The Philosophy of the Act*, (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1938), 136.

[86]Albert Bandura, "Selective Moral Disengagement in the Exercise of Moral Agency," *Journal of Moral Education* 31:2 (2002), 101-19. See also his updated, post-9/11 analysis of the selective exercise of moral agency (through the suspension of moral

solely to the dictates of an internal conscience which functions in relation to externally

imposed ethical norms, the dynamics of modern psychology suggests a more mutable stance

for the moral agent: one in whom the "shifting sands" of moral decision-making are strongly

affected—moral theologians might even say "distorted"—by political biases in the ambient

cultural milieu.

Bandura focuses on the intellectual processes of *moral disengagement*, a critical

first-step in moral agency, which regulate the amount and kind of control an individual gives

to moral decision-making; his perception provides a cognitive explanation of how a

person's conscience operates psychodynamically:

> In this self-regulatory process, people monitor their conduct and the conditions under which it occurs, judge it in relation to their moral standards and perceived circumstances, and regulate their actions by the consequences they apply to themselves. . . . The constraint of negative self-sanctions for conduct that violates one's moral standards and the support of positive self-sanctions for conduct faithful to personal moral standards operate anticipatorily. . . . It is through the ongoing exercise of evaluative self-influence that moral conduct is motivated and regulated. Morality is thus rooted in a self-reactive selfhood, rather than in dispassionate abstract reasoning.[87]

Furthermore, an individual does not exist in isolation, but rather operates in the

context of the society which influences from without, through a variety of mechanisms, the

self-regulatory processes of moral discernment within. Bandura's concern here is that

"there are many psychological manoeuvres by which moral self-sanctions can [actually] be

---

self-sanctions) to legitimize the use of lethal means: "Mechanisms of Moral Disengagement in Support of Military Force: the Impact of Sept. 11," *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology* 25:2 (2006), 141-65.

[87]Ibid., 102.

disengaged from inhumane conduct."[88] When these self-sanctions are unfastened so,

reprehensible behaviors are innoculated from further moral scrutiny and wrongful actions

are allowed to occur and continue. This personalized dynamic of moral disengagement

explains how people with the same putative moral standards can operate so differently as

regards their moral actions: the locus of control is not in their differing moral standards, but

in the variable, subjective activation of their individual self-regulatory mechanisms. These

divergences, in turn, then allow for dissimilar behaviors under similar circumstances, or

even vastly different actions taken by similar individuals within the same group.

Bandura outlines six techniques that enable moral disengagement, the first three of

which involve the joint manipulation of language and ideas by collective entities outside of

the individual, for example, civil authorities, the media, and the like. (1) In *moral*

justification, cognitive restructuring of the arguments warranting the behavior, such as the

claim of legitimate retaliation for the terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11th

or the need for self-defense against the assumptive future use of weapons of mass

destruction—both of which were touted as pretexts for the United States-led invasion of

Iraq in 2003—allows the ensuant actions to be construed as serving a worthy social or

moral purpose. The point in making the case for war here "is accomplished by cognitively

redefining the morality of killing so that it can be done free from self-censure."[89] (2)

Euphemistic labeling of unethical behavior allows the persons responsible for those actions

---

[88]Ibid.

[89]Ibid., 103. To bolster his point, Bandura notes that "over the centuries, much destructive conduct has been perpetrated by ordinary, decent people in the name of righteous ideologies, religious principles and nationalistic imperatives," ibid.

to see their conduct as respectable. Calling bombing raids "surgical strikes" and innocent civilian casualties "collateral damage" are examples given of what Bandura terms "sanitizing language"; use of the "agentless passive voice" ("mistakes were made") is another linguistic technique designed to reduce personal responsibility for harmful actions. (3) The broader attempt to invest harmful conduct with high moral purpose is termed *advantageous comparison*. The war in Vietnam, for example, was cast as a struggle to keep the spread of communism in check; similarly, the war in Iraq which commenced in 2003 was justified (only much later on—interestingly—*not* at the time of the preemptive first strike) by the moral imperative of removing the tyranny of Saddam Hussein. When commonsense analysis is obscured by fallacious argumentation, terrorists can end up being "martyrs," invaders, "liberators," and oppressors cast as guardians of law-and-order. Misrepresentation of the benefits to be accrued, and vague or specious calculations of the negative consequences of certain actions, are also used in support of advantageous comparisons.

An individual's behavior is also strongly influenced by the manner of execution provided by the ambient society for the actions taken, Bandura continues; here, moral disengagement "operates by obscuring or minimising the agentive role in the harm one causes."[90] (4) When social entities authorize an expansive action, the invasion of a country, for example, an individual's specific set of behaviors becomes broadly legitimized through a process Bandura labels *displacement of responsibility*. Personal responsibility is subsumed under the greater agency of the socially established organization; once in place, the honored

[90]Ibid., 106.

virtue of "following orders" takes over. Self-sanctioning is further diminished when social condemnation, i.e., dehumanization of the identified "enemy" is encouraged, and revelations of any harmful practices done to them are either characterized as isolated incidents or, if acknowledged, are blamed on low-level functionaries (e.g., the abuses at Abu Ghraib). (5) Similarly, *diffusion of responsibility* by group decision-making operates to minimize the responsibleness of any one individual within the group. Social diffusion of responsibility through multiple layers of authorization and chains of command obscures any personal accountability for the collective actions taken. (6) *Distortion of consequences* works to weaken moral probity by minimizing the perceived harm of the practices perpetrated, a perverse outcome which has only gotten worse as the spheres of human agency have expanded along with the technological advances of modern society. "Smart bombs" are touted for their efficiency, not the gruesome consequences of their deadly effect. Moreover, their devastation is recorded as blips on a radar screen from high up in the air, and not up-close where the pain inflicted might be more disturbingly eye-witnessed.[91]

---

[91]Bandura writes: "Our death technologies have become highly lethal and depersonalised. We are now in the era of faceless electronic warfare, in which mass destruction is delivered remotely with deadly accuracy by computer and laser-controlled systems. [Such is not the case] when people can see and hear the suffering they cause, [because] vicariously aroused distress [empathy] and self-censure serve as self-restrainers," ibid., 108. The tempering of human behavior by the nearness of perpetrators to the victims of their punitive actions would appear to be supported by the results obtained in a recent authority-based humiliation experiment: Bocchiaro and Zimbardo found that two-thirds of participants were willing to obey authority figures in the application of increasingly harsh negative verbal feedback up unto the point where they were moved to end their censures when the "victims" (actually confederates of the psychologists)—who were *in the same room* as the experimentees—begged them to stop and tried to free themselves from the chair to which their arms had been strapped. In other words, social distance was a critical factor in fostering more humane behavior—although one-third of participants were not so moved to stop at all. See: Piero Bocchiaro and Philip G. Zimbardo, "Defying Unjust

Somewhat akin to the comprehension of fundamental option, Bandura considers

moral agency as something developed over time: both moral disengagement and its

antithesis, proactive or pro-social morality, are processes that mutate incrementally with

changing occurrences.[92] Moral responsibility, then, would not exist solely in the moment of

any particular act, but would extend over the whole complex of reifying circumstances and

societal allowances accorded action, a labyrinth in which the individual moves

asymptotically toward moral courage and communal obligation, or away from them.[93] We

all participate in, and thus are responsible for, the social practices and structures which

support the psychological operations of collective moral disengagement in ourselves and

our institutions.[94] The reciprocal interaction and manipulation of personal and social

---

Authority: An Exploratory Study," *Current Psychology* 29 (2010), 155-170.

[92]To counter mechanisms of moral disengagement, Bandura suggests that their opposite ("pro-social morality") be promoted, most especially the humanization of others. In seeing, knowing, and appreciating people who are different from us, that is, in affirming a common humanity, powerful means of strengthening native moral control are enhanced. Additionally, personal acceptance of blameworthiness counteracts the tendency to fault others, particularly the victims, for the harmful actions taken, often characterized as unavoidable. Lastly, considering behavior in isolation (abuse is abuse is abuse, as it were), and *not* excusing it in the obfuscating context of justifications, or as authorizations by others, or allowable because of extenuating circumstances, can also help diminish self-serving, i.e., self-exonerating, tendencies which may foster harmful behaviors.

[93]Bandura gives this example to illustrate his point: "The merchandising of terrorism is not accomplished by a few unsavory individuals. It requires a worldwide network of reputable, high-level members of society who contribute to the deathly enterprise by fractionating the operation and diffusion of responsibility," ibid., 113.

[94]Herein may lie the real rub in reconciling Catholic theology with the tenets of modern psychology: whereas in the tradition the locus of sinfulness lies principally in the act, psychological science looks primarily to the personal context of the act. And while a particular action may or may not be sinful, the locus of *virtue*—the "place" where the agent is called to make a difference on the basis of internalized moral standards—may actually lie

sanctions can either strengthen our moral principles and compassion, or they can serve to ease our personal guilt and so open the way for moral conduct disengaged from our moral standards.

While the psychology of moral decision-making no more "explains" sin and evil than do Augustine's Bad Angels, the twentieth-century developments in philosophical anthropology, social existentialism, and cognitive psychology simply can not be put back into "Pandora's box." The Catholic theological tradition may not fit easily onto the modern age; still—as was true with Pandora—perhaps *hope* has also been released: the promise of a more comprehensive understanding of moral agency when advances in human thinking are not resisted, but rather taken into consideration. It is to this formidable task that the episcopal and papal magisteria turned their attention in the wake of the Second Vatican Council's call to read "the signs of the time" (*Gaudium et spes* §4). The documents produced by their deliberative work will be investigated in detail in the next chapter of this dissertation.

Summary

The brief historical review given above chronicling the development of moral agency suggests both continuity and change in comprehending our existential situation as free agents and our moral obligation to act justly. Many of the parameters from the earliest

outside the person: for example, in protesting the language of propaganda, resisting the seduction of commercialism, or in countering the treachery of political mystification.

formulations of moral agency still endure today, most especially the core axiom that our

actions are directly willed—though perhaps also highly influenced; even those perspectives

which allow some role for social determinism still hold that our moral responsibilities are

uniquely are own. In Augustine's time, abstract ethical principles were subject to scrutiny

as regards the degree to which and how it is that personal control operates in sinful actions.

Freedom to act, which impacts the voluntariness of sin, has always been seen as conditioned

by circumstances: from a fallen world in the grip of original sin to the contemporary

understanding of factors extrinsic to the individual as substantively shaping the person and

the conditions for moral behavior. It would appear that the tension between objective moral

standards and their subjective appropriation, as well as issues about mitigating

circumstances, have yet to be fully resolved.[95]

Another problematical aspect of moral agency has been the degree to which it

should be considered a matter of specific, individual actions or personal development over

time; Catholic theology has held both perspectives as valid. Traditionally, turning away

from God's grace (in the case of mortal sin, construed in an absolute sense) has been

understood to occur only in discrete actions, the moments of sin. Concepts like justice,

discipleship, and solidarity with the poor and oppressed, all supported by the modern

formulation of a christology from below, though, focus on sustained ethical commitments

---

[95]Pope John Paul II, though, warns of too great a reliance on human reasoning in these matters noting: "Some people, however, disregarding the dependence of human reason on Divine Wisdom and the need, given the present state of fallen nature, for Divine Revelation as an effective means for knowing moral truths, even those of the natural order, have actually posited a complete sovereignty of reason in the domain of moral norms regarding the right ordering of life in this world" (*VS* §36).

and moral behavior involving many actions over time. Neo-Thomistic virtue theory and the concept of fundamental option both reflect this "longer-view" of moral agency and ongoing conversion.

Thomas Aquinas's view of conscience relied on an understanding of natural law as freely apprehensible by all. He also expected sentient, moral beings to be aware of the conditions and circumstances of their moral behavior, holding that socially imposed values and norms could never fully excuse lapses of personal responsibility. While Thomas's assumptions are not necessarily controverted today, the added understanding of the interplay between culture and the individual has extended moral responsibility to include our collective actions as well. Corporate moral actions and the degrees of assent proffered collectivities by individuals, according to Bandura's concept of moral disengagement, bear directly on personal culpability in what Larry May would term our "shared responsibilities."

Finally, it is in the practical application of our moral standards to our actions that the fullest measure of moral agency can best be evaluated. No one who believes in free will can ever surrender the agential capacity of human beings completely to influences external to the person. While it may be true that "almost everyone is virtuous at the abstract level,"[96] it is also still true that it is on the concrete level of our own actions—however constrained by circumstances or influenced by the society around us they may be—that we are held accountable. And in a step further, particular to but not exclusive to the Christian tradition, our actions are also held liable to judgment by God. Magisterial reflections on this complex

---

[96]Bandura, "Selective Moral Disengagement," 115.

set of modern questions in moral agency, especially as considered in the context of social

sin, will follow in the next two chapters.

Heuristic Questions

The magisterial documents selected for analysis in this dissertation were not written

as systematic theological investigations of a purely theoretical nature. Rather, their genesis

was largely the result of pastoral concerns about the evolving social and moral situation of

our modern world. In that sense, the texts are not easy to compare: brought forth as they

were over a span of thirty years and produced from vastly different cultures, the documents

simply do not "match up." These writings do, however, address some topics in common,

and examining those areas of like interest through the heuristic device of "posing questions"

to the texts will help reveal their individual content and likewise illuminate—when taken

together—the development of magisterial thinking about sin and moral agency since

Vatican II.

Question One

One issue of continuing concern, as evidenced above, has been how best to

understand the way our consciences are formed. Since the faculty of being able to employ

human reason in applying objective moral norms (that is, natural law) to particular deeds is

critical for assessing culpability in both actions and inactions, the predetermining role of

conscience is foundational. Invincible ignorance, "an ignorance of which the subject is not

aware and which he is unable to overcome by himself" (*VS* §62), for example, has

traditionally been considered legitimately exculpatory. Seen in and by itself, conscience is

considered freely capable of discerning natural law; but as a product of the human spirit, it

is also subject to fallibility due to errors in "practical reason," to use St. Thomas's

terminology. According to Aquinas, the effort to form a healthy conscience is particularly

susceptible to the vice of sloth.[97] In conjunction with weaknesses in the virtues of prudence

and fortitude, it is easy for a "lazy" conscience to misguide. To what degree, then, can the

individual be held responsible for an improperly formed conscience? The Fathers at the

Second Vatican Council were well aware of the inherent dangers when they wrote:

> Yet it often happens that conscience goes astray through ignorance which it is unable
> to avoid, without thereby losing its dignity. This cannot be said of the man [*sic*] who
> takes little trouble to find out what is true and good, or when conscience is by degrees
> almost blinded through the habit of committing sin.[98]

Clearly the bishops at the last ecumenical council were holding the person responsible for "a

good conscience" (1 Tim 1:5). But is human freedom in this regard completely unfettered

---

[97]Curiously, St. Thomas calls sloth, "an oppressive sorrow," one leading to despair, which, in turn, can rob a person of the will to search out and do the good: "On the other hand, the fact that a man [*sic*] deems an arduous good impossible to obtain, either by himself or by another, is due to his being over downcast, because when this state of mind dominates his affections, it seems to him that he will never be able to rise to any good. And since sloth is a sadness that casts down the spirit, in this way despair is born of sloth," St. Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica*, II-II 20,4, literally translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province, second and revised edition, 1920 (online Edition Copyright © 2008 by Kevin Knight); available from: http://www.newadvent.org/summa/3020.htm.

[98]*Gaudium et spes*, §16, 917. Pope John Paul II says much the same in his encyclical *Veritatis splendor* when, recapitulating this very conciliar text, he writes concerning conscience: "There are faults which we fail to see but which nevertheless remain faults, because we have refused to walk towards the light," John Paul II, *VS* §63.

by the culture in which it is exercised? Or rather, do social circumstances—perhaps

themselves properly deemed sinful—corrupt the moral growth of the person so as to impact

the development of the very conscience which would be needed to inform individual

decision-making correctly? The quandary of the exercise of human freedom situated in a

cultural context will be broached by considering the contributions offered by the selected

texts according to this first of the heuristic questions to be posed: *How does each source*

understand the ways that our inherited social circumstances impact our moral agency?

Question Two

Our moral agency is impacted by society and the cultural milieu not just, so to

speak, "going in"—in terms of how our consciences are formed—but also "going out": how

we operate on a daily basis living out our faith in terms of practical actions. The Catholic

theologian Gregory Baum has helped clarify the relationship of personal agency and social

sin by employing insights derived from sociology to fashion what he terms "critical

theology": one that "distinguishes between intention and structural consequences and

evaluates the latter in terms of the gospel."[99] In his critical analysis, Baum focuses on the

dynamic and dialectical relationship between social institutions and the persons influenced

by them as regards the creation of "false consciousness," a type of self-delusion which

blinds the individual to transgressions, particularly those of a communal dimension. Rather

---

[99]Gregory Baum, "Critical Theology," in *Conversion: Perspectives on Personal and Social Transformation*, ed. Walter E. Conn (New York, NY: Alba House, 1978), 283.

than concentrate exclusively on personal virtue, Baum, like Johannes Baptist Metz before

him, is distressed by the "privatization" of the gospel message and the immoral state of

affairs sustained by those who benefit most from economic and social privilege.[100] Baum

argues for an awareness of how the false consciousness created by social institutions,

exemplified by "the achievement-orientation of the dominant culture, its individualistic and

competitive spirit, and our arrogant collective self understanding," can lead to "collective

decisions . . . which increase the injustices in society and intensify the power of the

dehumanizing trends."[101]

What Baum is getting at is not just the rationale of sin, but the nature of *sinning*:

how it is that people of good will participate in situations that oppress. The perduring of

inequities, one of the defining parameters of social sin, and the contribution of individual

actions to that process, are not readily apprehensible. The evil of established, exploitative

economic systems, for example, is already existent in the social milieu. The individual

inherits, as it were, the social sin, thus diffusing (at least to some degree) the culpability

ascribable to any personal contributions which may further it. Not only is the agency here

collective, and thus indeterminate as to any one person's responsibility for its combined

impact, but the very nature of the self-deception inherent in actions resulting from distorted

consciousness renders attributions of personal blameworthiness in these matters difficult to

---

[100]"The eschatological promises of the biblical tradition—freedom, peace, justice, reconciliation—do not permit themselves to be privatized. They constantly compel us to social responsibility," Johannes Baptist Metz, "Religion and society in the light of a political theology [The Dudleian Lecture]," *Harvard Theological Review* 61:4 (Oct 1968), 513.

[101]Baum, "Critical Theology," 289.

make. And yet the very definition of moral agency requires that there be some degree of accountability in sinning. Thus, a second heuristic question to bring forward for consideration in the documents selected for investigation is: *To what degree and in what manner do the texts conceptualize how individual actions contribute to social sin?*

Question Three

The matter of how moral agency interrelates with social sin in terms of its promotion, or at least, its allowance, is really only the beginning of the problem. "Structures of sin"[102] do not arise of themselves, so obviously human agents are involved. But what exactly is the nature of our involvement? The point is important not just to answer the heuristic question posed immediately above, but also to understand how best to remedy the evil done. Knowing the parameters of human action in relation to formal sin, i.e., gravity of matter, freedom, consciousness and will, may help us engage in understanding social sin. In fact, those same concepts could and should prove key in "reverse engineering" social sin into social justice and common virtue. But in exactly which direction should moral action turn?

---

[102]This expression has long history of use in post-Vatican II theology; see the works of Rosemarie E. Gorman and Margaret R. Pfeil cited in chapter one. The role of the term in the magisterial documents selected for examination in this dissertation will be brought forward in the next chapter, and the notion itself will be further analyzed in chapter four. Briefly put, the term refers to those mechanisms or modes of operation existing in society which set up and allow for actions and conditions contrary to God's will for the universal destination of all the goods of creation, including health, freedom and life itself.

Mark O'Keefe, who has expostulated the relationship between personal sin and social sin,[103] ties success in overcoming social sin to a personal affirmation of authentic values in the face of both cultural disvalues influencing from without and concupiscence derived from original sin arising from within. Picking up on Richard Gula's distinction of "evaluative knowledge" versus "conceptual knowledge" as a key prerequisite in moving toward right moral action,[104] O'Keefe ties the ultimate responsibility in *metanoia* to the individual—understanding, though, that people operate within the context of the community, in this case, the Christian community constituted as the Body of Christ: "People have the (situated) freedom to act contrary to the influence of social sin. In fact, they have a responsibility to do so. . . . This is especially true for Christians who belong to a community where an authentic knowledge of values is taught (though not always experientially grasped) and models of authentic exercises of freedom are enshrined (e.g. saints)."[105] In this understanding, personal repentance and redress for sins committed are inextricably tied to the communal, most especially to the church which embodies the highest values. The social nature of social sin can not be ignored, and so it will be critical to understand from the selected magisterial documents: *How do the sources articulate our*

---

[103]Mark O'Keefe, O.S.B., *What Are They Saying About Social Sin?*, New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1990. This little book is brilliantly succinct and indispensable.

[104]Richard M. Gula, S.S., *Reason Informed by Faith: Foundations of Catholic Morality* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1989), 83-87. See footnote no. 116 below for Gula's explication of these terms.

[105]Mark O'Keefe, O.S.B., "Social Sin and Fundamental Option," in *Christian Freedom: Essays by the Faculty of the Saint Meinrad School of Theology*, ed. Clayton N. Jefford (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 1993), 140.

moral response to rectify social sin in terms of both personal decisions and collective

actions?

Question Four

The centrality of the plight of the poor in the interplay of moral agency and social

sin can hardly be overstated. The *anawim*, the humble and oppressed known in the Hebrew

Bible as the poor who have to rely on Yahweh's help alone, are first and foremost, in the

Christian testament, acknowledged as the ones to whom the "good news" is especially to be

preached.[106] Although some might argue that the Roman magisterium has been rather chary

in embracing the term "preferential option for the poor"—indeed, distinguishing this

phraseology from "love of preference for the poor" has been a bone of contention between

liberation theologians and the Vatican (see discussion in the chapters below)—as early as

the 1981 Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio*, Pope John Paul II was using the

phrase; and he exhibited a growing ease with the use of that expression throughout his long

papacy.[107]

---

[106]References to this special arrangement are found throughout the New Testament, but none is perhaps more striking than the one found at the very beginning of Jesus' ministry; in the so-called "Nazarene Manifesto" found in the gospel of Luke (4:18-19), Jesus allies himself directly with the words of Third Isaiah [Is 61:1]: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor."

[107]See Gerald S. Twomey, *The "Preferential Option for the Poor" in Catholic Social Thought from John XXIII to John Paul II* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2005). Various writers (largely in or inspired by the Roman magisterium) have sought to expand the parameters of what "poor" actually encompasses to include the lonely, the unborn, etc. But most commentators always begin their considerations with the

There has never been much contention about the issue of what the poor deserve, or the obvious moral good in providing them as much assistance as possible. The trouble, rather, has been how to accurately estimate the contribution made to the problem of the poor by any one person, while at the same time plumbing what is required of any one individual in helping to remedy the situation of masses of people consigned to enduring impoverishment. Traditionally even in the law, it is the individual contribution made by persons to a group project that determines their individual degree of responsibility for the action taken (and their ensuant individual culpability). But in the case of social sin the linkage is neither so clear nor so tight: could there be some accountability which accrues to the individual even in the absence of direct causal relationship to the social sin?[108]

The contribution of a "theology of social sin" would consist in opening up the issue of poverty to understanding its full communal dimension, in terms of both its cause and cure. Remedying the plight of the poor is necessarily a shared responsibility: and so, it involves not only the moral response of the individual in terms of acts of charity, but also,

economically poor and oppressed in mind. In relation to social sin—a notion which arose out of the theology of Latin America reacting to its experience of economic injustice—the term "the poor" will be used here to denote primarily economic impoverishment, and only analogously other kinds of poverty. So-called "voluntary poverty," a virtuous choice of living, is immaterial to the discussion here since one of the things that makes economic destitution evil is its limitation on human freedom by its very involuntariness. Lastly, regarding the rectification of social sin, millennia of human history have proven that voluntary poverty is a "hard sell" to all but a very few, i.e., the saints.

[108]Dorothee Sölle, the perceptive theologian and German national, puts a human face on this ethical predicament when she writes about her experience of being personally resented when she was living in the Netherlands after the Second World War; she comes to realize: "I am also responsible for the house which I did not build, but in which I live"; quoted in Ted Peters, *Sin: Radical Evil in Soul and Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), 30.

and perhaps even more importantly, the response of the entire church (ἐκκλησία, the people called forth) in fostering communal action which benefits the poor. Understanding the centrality of the issue of poverty to the very nature of the church, an idea resonant with the concept of the "church of the poor" which surfaced at Vatican II, was to be a major focus of the episcopal deliberations at Medellín and Puebla. It would not be a stretch to contend that it was reaction to the documents produced at those two meetings of the Latin American bishops which constituted the major impetus for those texts of John Paul II which have been selected for investigation in this dissertation. Thus, the fourth heuristic question to consider is: *What does each source's analysis of the particular issue of poverty reveal about moral agency in relation to social sin?*

Question Five

Religious experience, understood as the interplay of God coming to us and as us moving towards God, necessarily involves transcendence. Certainly in the matter of sin, the overcoming of evil can only occur when the person moves beyond the current state of affairs and towards newness of life marked by new ways of acting. Stephen Happel calls that necessarily "active transformation" *conversion*, and he ties it inextricably to discipleship.[109] As was mentioned in the previous chapter, the Hebrew root of the word for

---

[109]Stephen Happel and James J. Walter, *Conversion and Discipleship: A Christian Foundation for Ethics and Doctrine* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 221.

repentance (*shub*) means "a change of direction"; so, any self-transcendence must be evidenced by "turning back" on old habits and moving toward new ways of doing things.[110]

What is true for the individual in regard to conversion is also true for the community which wishes to change direction and which must bear some responsibility for collective sin. Catholic theologians in the modern era have engaged some of the issues related to personal responsibility vis-à-vis the idea of social conversion. Gregory Baum, for example, argues that social conversion begins with a self-examination of our own ideas and assumptions:

> The *metanoia* to which the gospel summons us demands that we examine our own personal lives as well as the injustices and contradictions in the various institutions to which we belong, be they political, economic, educational, ecclesiastical, or whatever. The raising of consciousness in regard to institutional life is part and parcel of the conversion away from sin.[111]

Self-examination is important in social conversion because sinful social structures and legitimating ideologies (which do derive from individuals) operate to subvert criticism by engendering in people disvalues which then create a false moral consciousness (such as the "more-is-good" mantra of American consumerism).[112] Moving in the other direction, so to speak, social conversion functions to restructure prevailing ideologies along new contours

---

[110]Cf. Eph 4:22-24: "You should put away the old self of your former way of life, corrupted through deceitful desires, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new self, created in God's way in righteousness and holiness of truth."

[111]Baum, "Critical Theology," 290.

[112]These disvalues, by the way, function as mechanisms of oppression not only for the poor and powerless who are its victims, but also for those who hold the advantage in society. False values drive the rich into self-destructive patterns of behavior that are equally at odds with God's plan for humanity. When ideologies replace truth, perpetrators of social sin become victims. See Patrick Kerans, "Freely in Bondage to Our Own Economic Vision," *Sinful Social Structures* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1974), 101-104.

in order to effect more ethical decision-making which, in turn, operates to reform the inequitable institutions at the root of social sin.[113] Of particular importance for Baum are the collective decisions that a society makes in terms of policy; thus, social conversion is inseparable from social transformation.

Donal Dorr also makes a similar growth-through-understanding claim for social conversion.[114] The first step anyone must take in the process is to understand the present system as unjust and learn how it operates and is maintained (i.e., undertake critical social analysis). The second step is to disentangle ourselves from the unjust structures to the degree that is practical and possible,[115] always making resistance to structural injustice a central—not peripheral—focus of our lives. The third step Dorr outlines is to work on the establishment of alternative structures and procedures which promote justice. He, like Baum, emphasizes social conversion as a process over time: a series of operations undertaken which transform first ideas, then ideologies, and only finally, structures. The cognitive restructuring in the individual that occurs along the way and heralds acceptance of

---

[113]Kenneth Himes reaches the same conclusion when he states (rather more simply put) that "the first step in combatting social sin is attacking our ideological blindness"; Kenneth R. Himes, "Social Sin and the Role of the Individual," in *The Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics*, ed. Alan B. Anderson (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1987), 214.

[114]Donal Dorr, *Spirituality and Justice* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1984), 80-81.

[115] In this regard, Dorr invokes the idea of compromise in the sense that Charles E. Curran conceives his *theology of compromise* (as described by Mark O'Keefe), "a realistic acceptance that moral effort always occurs in a world in which both grace and sin are operative, a world in which the reign of God is only partially realized"; O'Keefe, *What Are They Saying*, 68.

new values can never be our final destination, however; orthopraxis—the living out of those revised values—as a result of our new patterns of thinking, is essential.[116]

If there is, then, such a thing as social sin, its remedy can be achieved only through social conversion, the movement of "the many" surpassing the status quo and acting in new ways. This kind of conversion, though, implies a plural subject acting in concert for a particular purpose. Such a notion has not come easily into Catholic theological discourse, although—as will be shown—Pope John Paul II became more comfortable with this idea towards the end of his papacy. More often than not, though, the Roman magisterium has clung to the individual alone as the locus of moral agency and, by extension, as the one bearing moral responsibility solely. If structures can be sinful but cannot themselves sin, what about social pluralities—can they be sinful and yet bear no obligation to convert as a whole, but only as collected individuals? To illuminate how the selected documents answer these vexing issues a final question will be posed: *What does each set of texts say about the role of personal and communal conversion in the matter of moral agency and social sin?*

Conclusion

---

[116]Richard Gula makes much the same point in his distinction between conceptual knowledge and evaluative knowledge: "A mere conceptual grasp that a particular course of action is right or wrong is not enough to ensure that a person will act in a virtuous way. . . . A personal commitment to value is an essential dimension of moral behavior. . . . Evaluative knowledge is a felt knowledge which we discover through personal involvement and reflection. It is not something which can easily be passed on through statements, formulas, or rules"; Gula, *Reason Informed by Faith,* 84-85.

As noted earlier, the magisterial writings selected for analysis in this thesis address similar topic areas, even if they do differ significantly in both purpose and substance. By posing to the texts, as it were, the five heuristic questions listed above, areas of common understanding—as well as divergence—will be made evident. As each text is queried according to the five questions and their basic tenets are then synthesized (the project of chapter four), a foundation for better understanding magisterial teaching on the modern interface of sin and moral agency will be established. Before that task can be accomplished, however, the groundwork will have to be laid for this later investigation by means of a careful analysis in the next chapter of the magisterial documents themselves.

CHAPTER THREE

ANALYSIS OF SELECTED DOCUMENTS

For the poor challenge the Church constantly, summoning it to conversion. . . . We realize that structural transformation is the outward expression of inner conversion. We know that this conversion begins with ourselves. Without the witness of a converted Church, our word as pastors would be futile.

> Third General Conference of Latin American Bishops (Puebla)

Introduction

As mentioned earlier, a core group of post-Vatican II magisterial documents has been selected for detailed analysis in this dissertation in order to sample church teaching on moral agency in the modern era of social sin. In this chapter magisterial core assumptions and doctrines will be examined in detail; in the next chapter the ethical instructions arising from the texts will be reanalyzed and synthesized according to their responsiveness to each of the five heuristic questions posed above. What follow are not summaries of the texts *per se*, but rather clustered extracts chosen to illuminate the essential character of what the magisteria hold and teach as true regarding the complex relationship between sin and moral agency.

The texts reviewed below differ one from the other in purpose, scope, and provenance. The CELAM conferences were regional in nature and addressed issues

primarily affecting the faithful living in Latin America; only secondarily were the documents

produced at the end of the conferences meant to speak to the universal church. The pope,

on the other hand, is *sui juris* understood to exercise a universal teaching office, one which

encompasses both his own statements and those pronouncements officially approved which

emanate from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF). The relevant point

here is not what degrees of authority accompany various kinds of magisterial documents,[1]

but simply to note both tradition and canon law uphold that the bishops "are the authentic

instructors and teachers of the faith for Christ's faithful entrusted to their care" (Canon

753). Thus, it may fairly be held, all of the texts to be considered here represent *official*

teaching. The "ordinary universal magisterium" is actually quite a broad concept and its

purview extends to all the bishops, including the bishop of Rome.

Of greater importance than consideration of the "levels" comprising the teaching

office of the church is perhaps the core compositional element of plural vs. single authorship

in the selected texts. While the seven position papers which undergird the final document

produced at the Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops at Medellín in 1968

have individual authors, the important *Conclusions* which constitute the second volume of

The Church in the Present-Day Transformation of Latin America in Light of the Council

are written by the Latin American bishops as a congress, though not necessarily as a whole:

"These Documents contain the fruit of the labors of the sixteen commissions and sub-

---

[1]For such an analysis see Francis A. Sullivan, S.J., *Creative Fidelity: Weighing and Interpreting Documents of the Magisterium* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1996).

commissions into which the Conference was divided."[2] Similarly composite in nature is the

1979 *Conclusions* text drawn from the Third General Conference of Latin American

Bishops at Puebla and published as: *Evangelization at Present and in the Future of Latin*

America. Final Document of the Third General Conference of the Latin American

Episcopate. As consensus documents, the CELAM texts tend to exhibit what, in

psychology, is termed "regression toward the mean": in order to get agreement from all the

various individuals present at the episcopal conferences, ideas must necessary be broad

rather than pointed, and the final language used conciliatory rather that bold. Such plural

authorship is bound to affect the final outcome of the texts, fashioned as they were so that

all might give assent, though perhaps without any one bishop in absolute agreement with all

the points made.

The magisterial writings of John Paul II are less constrained by group processes:

although the pope writes surely with the help of others, he is at greater liberty to pen his

papal documents more or less as he sees fit.[3] It is true that in 1984 with *Reconciliatio et*

---

[2]Archbishop Avelar Brandao Vilela, President, and Monseñor Eduardo Pironio, Secretary General, "Presentation," in CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 1*, Position Papers*, 13. See also Archbishop Marcos McGrath's thoughts on the net effect of having sixteen documents produced at Medellín versus the synthesized single document coming out of Puebla in his discussion, "The Puebla Final Document: Introduction and Commentary" published in *Puebla and Beyond: Documentation and Commentary*, John Eagleson and Philip Scharper, ed., translated by John Drury (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979), 87-88.

[3]Martin K. Barrack offers this opinion on the writing process employed by John Paul II: "Using phenomenological analysis, which emphasizes careful description, John Paul II often approaches the same question from several different angles within a single document. He describes, thinks, judges, and then repeats the cycle often with only a slight variation. He also freely integrates insights from philosophy, theology, anthropology, and other disciplines. . . . The phenomenological approach is also a clue to Pope John Paul II's personal authorship of many of his encyclicals. Every Pope is assisted by the responsible

paenitentia ("Reconciliation and Penance"), the pope was writing in response to the conclusions just drawn at the close of the 1983 Sixth General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (in conjunction with the background material provided by the International Theological Commission from earlier that year). As "a synthesis of the work of the world's bishops by the pope [fashioned to] articulate the teaching of synodal meetings,"[4] such an Apostolic Exhortation, it may be said, is not a free creation of the pope's alone. But still with this text, and particularly with the other selected papal documents, mostly encyclicals, there can be no mistaking the author's "voice."

Each of the magisterial texts will now examined in detail with an eye to relating the passages selected and brought forward to the heuristic questions posed above. For quick reference, here again are the five questions outlined in detail in the previous chapter. Question One: "How does each source understand the ways that our inherited social circumstances impact our moral agency?" Question Two: "To what degree and in what manner do the texts conceptualize how individual actions contribute to social sin?" Question Three: "How do the sources articulate our moral response to rectify social sin in terms of both personal decisions and collective actions?" Question Four: "What does each

---

dicastery [curial congregations such as the CDF] in producing his encyclicals. In most cases the dicastery writes the encyclical according to the Holy Father's instructions and submits it for his approval. The Holy Father makes changes as necessary and signs the final version. This is all highly confidential; the Pope's signature makes it his encyclical. However, in Pope John Paul II's case, his phenomenological approach and distinctive writing style make it possible to conclude that he pretty much writes his own encyclicals," Martin K. Barrack, "History of Church Letters," Précis of Official Catholic Teaching published in *The Catholic Faith* magazine, Nov-Dec 2001 issue available at: http://www.secondexodus.com/html/vaticandocs/general/historyofchurchletters.htm.

[4]This remark comes from Margaret R. Pfeil, "The Language of Social Sin," 137.

source's analysis of the particular issue of poverty reveal about moral agency in relation to social sin?" Question Five: "What does each set of texts say about the role of personal and communal conversion in the matter of moral agency and social sin?"

Episcopal Texts from Latin America

CELAM, Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops [Medellín], 1968
"The Church in the Present-Day Transformation of Latin America in Light of the Council"
La Iglesia en la Actual Transformation de América Latina a la Luz del Concilio

While the CELAM conference at Medellín, Colombia was primarily a regional look inward at the situation in Latin America, it became clear by the end of the session on 6 September 1968 that its teaching would impact the church as a whole. Louis Michael Colonnese, Director of the Division for Latin America of the United States Catholic Conference (USCC) wrote concerning that broader audience in an introduction to a translation of the documents:

> The [USCC] realized that the mentality of change engendered at Medellín a phenomenon whose impact is not limited to the Latin American Church which conceived it. The responsibility to accept the dynamic commitment of Medellín is omnipresent within the universal Church, but its significance and the demands it will entail are not understood by the People of God whom they so intimately affect.[5]

It was to promote conscientization (*conscientizaçao*, defined as "the process of stimulating a revitalized spiritual and socio-economic awareness among the People of God"), that the USCC published the documents of the Second General Conference of Latin American

---

[5] CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 9-10.

Bishops in English a year later as "the essential first step in the arduous task of seeking to actively implement these progressive pastoral guidelines."[6]

The final CELAM documents coming out of the Medellín conference were issued in two parts. After reflecting on the process of transformation in seven Position Papers, the Latin American bishops published that first volume, with forthright awareness of "history's judgment on her [the Church's] chiaroscuro past."[7] Assuming on behalf of the universal church "the full historical responsibility that befalls her in the present,"[8] the episcopal leaders of the Latin American church then went on to outline a comprehensive call to action. So it is that the second volume of the Medellín documents, entitled *Conclusions*, comprises a pragmatic plan of proposals, under sixteen topic headings, fashioned to rectify the situation of injustice described in the first volume. Not content with just acknowledging the "signs of the times," the Latin American bishops appeal to the whole church—and beyond—for substantive change: "We call to all men [*sic*] of good will that they cooperate in truth, justice, love and liberty, in this transforming labor of our peoples, the dawn of a new era."[9]

Volume I: Position Papers (*Ponencias*)

---

[6]Ibid., 10.

[7]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 47.

[8]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 47.

[9]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 42.

The seven Position Papers which comprise the first volume of writings to come out of the Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops are individual reflections on the major themes to be addressed at the conference, authored by several of the prominent bishops holding leadership positions in CELAM at the time. Reviewing these essays with an eye to the five heuristic questions developed above will begin to disclose the magisterial teaching on social sin and moral agency covered more expansively in the second volume of texts, *Conclusions*.

"The Signs of the Time in Latin America Today"
Los signos de los tiempos en América Latina hoy

At the beginning of their published documents, the Latin American bishops set forth the existential premise that society fashions the moral state of affairs of the moment, and so set the stage for how our moral agency is exercised in relation to the inherited social situation [1].[10] Bishop Marcos McGrath opens *Ponencias* with a Position Paper titled, "The Signs of the Time in Latin America Today," borrowing that famous line from the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council,[11] thus bringing up for scrutiny how particular historical

---

[10]Arabic numerals put in brackets (ex., [1]) refer back to the set of heuristic questions explicated in the latter part of chapter two of this dissertation and also outlined immediately above (pp. 129-30). Points made in the analysis of the magisterial texts are "keyed" to the questions in order to highlight their direct relevance to each of the specific queries. The elements so highlighted will be brought together and synthesized in chapter four.

[11]"At all times the Church carries the responsibility of reading the signs of the time and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel," *Gaudium et spes*, §4, 905.

circumstances have influenced the tenor of the times. McGrath describes the "task of

changing unjust structures" as "urgent,"[12] and characterizes the role of the church in this

endeavor as exigent: that it must "insist on a pedagogy of change."[13] Obviously there is

more going on here than a mere twinge of social conscience. Bishop McGrath is clearly

disturbed by "the selfishness of certain privileged groups which, in order to benefit from

their own privileges, refuse to open themselves to the more necessary socio-economic

changes."[14] Operating at the nexus of salvation history and human history, the church must

mediate the necessary external transformation through an internal changeover of spirit

among its privileged members:

> She [the institutional Church] can awaken the conscience and indeed form it, even
> indicate the more obvious paths of action to be taken . . . that favor the integral
> development of our peoples and countries. . . . She can, and indeed ought where
> proper and possible, to support, in collaboration with other social forces, all those
> tasks of promotion and development that can serve as models and incentives for the
> whole process.[15]

The role of conscience formation or conscientization, then, is not just necessary for those

exhibiting "selfishness," but is really a responsibility of the church as a whole—and in

---

[12]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 1*, Position Papers*, 88. {"La urgente tarea del cambio de estructuras injustas"; CELAM, Segunda Conferencia General del Episcopado Latinoamericano [Medellín], *La Iglesia en la Actual Transformación de América Latina a la Luz del Concilio. I Ponencias*, Edición Oficial del Secretariado General del CELAM (Santiago, Chile: Ediciones Paulinas, 1968), 82.}

[13]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 1*, Position Papers*, 89.

[14]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 1*, Position Papers*, 102-3. {"El egoísmo de ciertos grupos privilegiados que se cierran, en beneficio de sus prerrogativas, a los cambios socio-económicos más necesarios"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia, I Ponencias*, 97.}

[15]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 1*, Position Papers*, 104.

particular, of its hierarchy. It is crucial for the church to "denounce existing evil situations,"

to be sure; but even more importantly, McGrath contends, "word has to be followed by

action" lest the people lose all hope.[16]

"Christian Interpretation of the Signs of the Time in Latin America Today"
Interpretación cristiana de los signos de los tiempos hoy en América Latina

The problem of poverty was the most pressing issue before the bishops meeting at

Medellín. Bishop Eduardo Pironio, General Secretary of CELAM and the Second

Conference, addresses the moral danger—for both the poor and those who are *not*

poor—presented by the great disparity in wealth between the peoples of Latin America. In

his Position Paper titled, "Christian Interpretation of the Signs of the Time in Latin America

Today," Bishop Pironio looks at the situation around him and flatly declares: "It is evident

that in the Latin American reality there is a 'condition of sin' that ought to be transformed

into a reality of justice and sanctity. . . . All men [*sic*] and all peoples ought to feel

collectively culpable, commit themselves to conquer the sin within, [and] fight for liberation

from its consequences (hunger, misery, sickness, oppression, and ignorance)."[17] Thus both

---

[16]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 1*, Position Papers*, 104.

[17] CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 1*, Position Papers*, 112. {"Es evidente que en la realidad latinoamericana hay una 'situación de pecado' que debe ser transformada en realidad de justicia y santidad. . . . Todos los hombres y todos los pueblos deben sentirse solidariamente culpables, comprometerse a vencer el pecado en sí mismos, luchar por la liberación de sus consecuencias (el hambre y la miseria, las enfermedades, la opresión y la ignorancia)"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia, I Ponencias*, 106.} Rosemarie Gorman, whose study of the rise of the language of social sin is exhaustive, credits this quote of Monseñor Pironio's as the first use of the term, *situación de pecado* in a pastoral document;

the reality of social sin and the moral response required in the face of the evil of poverty are clearly brought forward into consideration [4].

The situation of the well-to-do, however, creates a particular moral danger in this regard. Bishop Pironio lays out a theological anthropology in which the existential vocation of each human being is described as "*personal fidelity*, a joyful and total response to a divine call"[18] of giving oneself for the sake of community. This faithfulness to God's grace is threatened, though, in two ways. The needs of the poor, posing "an urgent obligation for the Church to denounce prophetically the unjust conditions which keep man [*sic*] from realizing the concrete possibilities of his mission,"[19] also limit the opening for that "joyful response" of self-giving expected from God's creatures. For the well-off—including "the Church of Latin America [which] today feels called to give a particular witness of poverty"—there is another danger: "[The church] experiences the need of seeing herself free from temporal ties that commit her, detached from unnecessary material goods that paralyze her."[20] Implicit in Bishop Pironio's exhortations is the understanding that any "personal fidelity" can be compromised by problematic associations and extravagant possessions. The call for social transformation is inextricably tied to the need for conversion [5].

---

see Gorman, "The Contributions of Gustavo Gutiérrez and Juan Luis Segundo to a Theology of Social Sin," 104.

[18]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 1*, Position Papers*, 116.

[19]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 1*, Position Papers*, 116.

[20]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 1*, Position Papers*, 120.

"The Church in Latin America and Human Promotion"
    La iglesia en América Latina y la promoción humana

With belief in the power of the church's social teaching to rectify social sin and bring

about economic justice in terms of both personal decisions and collective actions [3],

Bishop Eugenio de Araújo Sales recommends a new role for the church in Latin America in

his Position Paper, "The Church in Latin America and Human Promotion." Base-level

ecclesial communities (*comunidades eclesiales de base*) foster the development of social

awareness and hence promote *conscientization* or liberating consciousness. The Brazilian

bishop proposes that "parishes become centers of authentic formation of the human-

Christian communities, not only places for administration of the sacraments and

proclamation of the truths of the Gospel. . . . Men [*sic*] are to be awakened to the meaning

of their dignity . . . encouraging them to demand . . . the respect due the human person and

his inalienable rights."[21] And again: "Parishes are not to be merely sources of spiritual life

but also centers of the integral formation of man."[22] Other social institutions, most

especially Catholic universities, are to use their intellectual resources to join in the search

for solutions to the problems of Latin America. In all, the focus of this position paper is on

the concrete transformation of those economic systems and other structures of society

which prevent the full development of all people through an activist, *engagé* role for the

---

[21]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 1*, Position Papers*, 142.

[22]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 1*, Position Papers*, 142.

church, with the hierarchy, inspired by the *comunidades eclesiales de base*, itself leading the way.

"Evangelization in Latin America"
        La evangelización en América Latina

The role of personal and communal conversion in the matter of moral agency and social sin [5] is taken up next in *Ponencias* in terms of evangelization, described as an essential task of the church whose very purpose has been constituted by Christ as missionary. An important point made at the outset by Bishop Samuel Ruiz García in his Position Paper, "Evangelization in Latin America," is that conversion is seen as a step coming *prior* to the exercise of liturgy. Bishop Ruiz García describes this necessary, personal response to the kerygma of the church in absolutist terms: "The evangelized man [*sic*] *is converted* first of all into a believer *who internally breaks away* completely from the material world and binds himself completely to God."[23] That material world affects not only what we enjoy in terms of our own personal economic position, but also limits our ability to respond as moral agents to the situation of the poor around us [1]. As Ruiz García forcefully describes it, the dislocation and urbanization of Latin American society creates a de-Christianizing "'milieu,' [i.e.,] that group of values, ideas, and models which . . .

---

[23]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 1*, Position Papers*, 158.

unconsciously forms mentalities, imposing criteria and ways of action."[24] In other words,

the culture works counter to the Gospel message of conversion.

To the already converted, the church's role shifts to catechesis, admitted by Bishop

Ruiz García frankly as being weak and largely ineffectual in Latin America. Compounding

this problem is a dichotomous split between the rich and the poor, the former prey to

secularization, materialism, and atheism, and the latter in danger of ritualism and reversion

to paganism. In response to these challenges, the church is exhorted to continually convert

the baptized to an ever-deepening relationship with Christ: "The faith of the convert is not

reduced to following the dogmatic truths revealed and proposed by the Church, a kind of

endorsement of the creed; it is a change of life, of mentality, an event which embraces all of

his being, a personal encounter with Christ."[25] Given the particular situation in Latin

America, however, Ruiz García warns that "we cannot evangelize the poor if we [the

church] are a power elite. The weak and oppressed will alienate themselves from Christ if

we appear to be allied with the powerful."[26] Bishop Ruiz García thus brings attention once

---

[24]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 1*, Position Papers*, 163. In some respects, Bishop Ruiz García's analysis here is an adumbration of the ideas developed later by Gregory Baum in his description of "false consciousness"; see Baum, "Critical Theology," 289.

[25]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 1*, Position Papers*, 168.

[26]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 1*, Position Papers*, 172. {"Los pobres no podrán ser evangelizados si nosotros somos latifundistas [large landowners]; los débiles y oprimidos se alejarán de Cristo, si nosotros aparecemos aliados con los poderosos"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia, I Ponencias*, 166-67.} The use of the term *latifundistas* is specific here and carries a precise meaning which the English translation of "power elite" does not transmit: at the time of the Second General Conference, the institutional church in Latin America actually owned vast tracts of land and other large estates in the various countries. This "private" ownership of land abetted, in a rather direct manner, the

again to the distinct situation of the church in Latin America, one that is perceived as

morally compromised.

"Pastoral Care of the Masses and the Elite"
    Pastoral de masas y pastoral de élites

In his Position Paper titled, "Pastoral Care of the Masses and the Elite," Bishop Luis

E. Henríquez continues the theme that a comfortable economic perch negatively impacts

our moral agency [1]. Addressing the ethics of the social "elites," namely, the industrial

magnates, large landowners, and economically privileged, Bishop Henríquez emphasizes the

necessity "to form and arouse their Christian conscience because these groups are for the

most part devoid of social awareness or have a dull sense of it," and he urges efforts to that

end which focus on the "constant work [which can be] accomplished through calm but firm

dialogue and counseling."[27] In terms of the proper moral response needed to rectify social

sin [3], Bishop Henríquez posits a straight and clear path which goes from the promptings

---

exploitation of the poor who owned no land. The collusion of the hierarchical church with
the existent economic structures and social oppression present in Latin American society
was a specific criticism leveled by reformers and liberation theologians during this era. It is
for this reason that specific recommendations surfaced at Medellín for the institutional
church to divest its large land holdings (see the comments of Cardinal Muñoz Vega below).
While it is often hard to know exactly to "whom" the bishops are referring when they use
the term *la Iglesia* (laity, clergy, hierarchy, etc. or everyone in common) Bishop Ruiz
García appears to have in mind for critique, at least in this instance, the institutional church
operating as a political entity and economic force within the larger society.

[27]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 1*, Position Papers*, 222. {"Formar o
avivar su conciencia cristiana; porque estos grupos, en su conjunto, con frecuencia no
tienen conciencia social, o la tienen adormecida. . . un trabajo continuado, sereno y firme de
diálogo y de asesoramiento"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia, I Ponencias*, 211-212.}

of the Gospel directly to social transformation: the church must "positively illumine

consciences, encourage and support social initiatives . . . It is therefore doubly necessary to

make them [the influential groups formed by private enterprise within the society] aware of

their social and Christian obligations."[28] The bishop from Caracas exhibits a strong belief in

the power of the appeal to conscience, stating that it will allow persons "to focus them [the

identified problems of economic disparity] in the light of a Christian view of the world, and

be able to discern the duties of a Christian in the unifying work for a better and more

peaceful world."[29] Support of integral development for all people and the promotion of

social peace are cast primarily as duties for the Catholic layperson, rather than as a direct

responsibility of the institutional church.

"Visible Unity of the Church and Pastoral Coordination"
    Unidad visible de la Iglesia y coordinación pastoral

Cardinal Pablo Muñoz Vega picks up on Bishop Eduardo Pironio's opening

Ponencia concerning the core issue of poverty [4] in his own Position Paper, "Visible Unity

of the Church and Pastoral Coordination." The proper moral response required in the face

of systemic poverty is a task particularly acute for "a bureaucratic Church, a Church whose

great buildings imply wealth and power, a Church linked to the secularized structures of a

---

[28]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 1*, Position Papers*, 222-23.

[29]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 1*, Position Papers*, 228.

society governed by an oligarchy, of a paralyzed Church."[30] In answer to this critique, the Cardinal quotes a point made in the background document (*Documento Base*) prepared for the conference: "[There is a] need for Church structures to manifest a spirit of service . . . In Latin America this demands a testimony of poverty."[31] This "evangelical poverty" is needed both for "personal sanctification" and to insure "the maximum yield for the works of social promotion favoring the needy and marginal groups." Furthermore, the Cardinal argues, this "evangelical simplicity" (in ecclesial housing and buildings) is necessary "if we wish the institutional forms of the Church to become, in the contemporary world, efficient apostolic structures, winning hearts to the faith and the charity of Christ."[32] Beyond witness and example, and more substantively and pointedly, Cardinal Muñoz Vega urges an "intelligent and generous agrarian reform of Church lands" which would not only redound to the benefit of the poor, but would also "abolish the situation which now forces her [the Church] to live on investment profits that create the current image of a wealthy Church."[33]

"Pastoral Coordination"
    Coordinación pastoral

---

[30]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 1*, Position Papers*, 246.

[31]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 1*, Position Papers*, 253-54.

[32]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 1*, Position Papers*, 254.

[33]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 1*, Position Papers*, 254. {"Una inteligente y generosa reforma agraria en los predios eclesiásticos . . . Ella [la Iglesia] puede ir desprendiéndose de las actuales condiciones que la obligan a vivir de posiciones y créditos que crean la imagen de ser una Iglesia rica"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia, I Ponencias*, 243.}

Drawing a portrait of a "typical" parish with its many social stratifications and limited religious participation, Bishop Leonidas E. Proaño outlines a joint pastoral plan of renewal in his Position Paper titled "Pastoral Coordination." In the course of his analysis advocating change, Bishop Proaño brings up the important issue of conversion [5] and talks about the necessity of inner transformation coming *first*: "Before there is a change in structures there must be a change in mentality, and better still than a change in mentality, a change of heart, a profound continuing conversion of the whole man, a renovation of the spirit"[34] [5]. From oneness in the Spirit will come the unity of vision, attitude, and common purpose necessary to effect meaningful change in the lot of the poor. Once achieved, this necessary inner conversion must be lived out each day in unabashed political engagement. Bishop Proaño calls for the church to become immersed in the realities of the present-day situation in Latin America—the poverty and oppression which leads to talk of violence and revolution—by exhibiting an attitude of solidarity: "Every day we must be in the world and live among men [*sic*], share the poverty of the poor . . . speak out against injustice . . . evangelize the poor . . . because their cause is Christ's."[35]

Volume II: Conclusions (*Conclusiones*)

"Human Promotion" [Topics 1-5]

---

[34]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 1*, Position Papers*, 267.

[35]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 1*, Position Papers*, 274.

Promoción humana

Without elaborate preface, the Latin American bishops begin this first, and perhaps most critical section of *Conclusions* by simply acknowledging the many studies already in existence which describe the human misery of large masses of the Latin American people (topic no. 1, "Justice"). The want of socio-cultural integration—meaning the imposition of a dominant culture, i.e., the rich, over another, the poor—is immediately identified as the source of the problem; the bishops are not reticent in labeling this unfortunate reality as a cause for sin: "The lack of solidarity which, on the individual and social levels, leads to the committing of serious ["real"] sins, evident in the unjust structures which characterize the Latin American situation."[36] While not spelling out which or exactly how particular individual actions contribute to the problem of the evil of injustice [2], the bishops are nonetheless quick to identify the root cause of the sin in that very lack of social concord marked by great economic disparity. Noting that authentic liberation is possible only through profound conversion [5], the Latin American bishops then declare:

The uniqueness of the Christian message does not so much consist in the affirmation of the necessity for structural change, as it does in the insistence on the conversion of men [*sic*] which will in turn bring about this change. We will not have a new continent without new

---

[36]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 58. "Solidarity," as will be seen, is a critical term found in many places in the CELAM documents; it is used extensively in the writings of John Paul II as well. The concept is multifaceted and is put forward by the magisteria as an ideal or virtue as well as a Christian obligation (the "duty of solidarity" mentioned in *Populorum progressio* §48). As will be evident in the synthesis of magisterial teaching presented in chapter four, lack of solidarity with the poor is seen as both cause and consequence of their misery. On the"flip-side," so to speak, increased solidarity among Christians is frequently touted as the only means of overcoming social sin.

and reformed structures, but, above all, there will be no new continent without new men, who know how to be truly free and responsible according to the light of the Gospel.[37]

In addition to exhorting the business community to function in conformity to the social teachings of the church, the bishops call for an active role for the church's own organizations, working in conjunction with other organs of society, to bring about the dynamic changes needed to rectify economic injustice [3]. Specifically, they recommend an increased role for labor organizations, renewed agrarian reform (land redistribution and cooperatives), political reform, and social education (*concientización*) at all levels. *Cáritas*, as well as other social organizations within the church, "*will not be* solely a welfare institution, but rather will *become operational* in the developmental process of Latin America, as an institution authentically dedicated to its growth."[38]

Quoting *Populorum progressio*'s statement, "development is the new name for peace [§87]," the bishops of the Second General Conference in topic no. 2, "Peace," make a clear linkage between peace and justice.[39] The absence of justice, that is, injustice—identified by the bishops in the opening paragraph as "Latin American under-

---

[37]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 58. The change of heart necessary for meaningful reform is a consequence of true conversion; it is also a precondition for establishing structural change that will last. The point made here is developed below in the synthesis of magisterial teaching (chapter four), particularly in the section related to the role of conversion [5].

[38]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 67.

[39]Cf. the teaching of the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council when they affirm, "Peace . . . must be actualized by man [*sic*] thirsting after an ever more perfect reign of justice," *Gaudium et spes*, §78, 986-87.

development"—is further identified as "those realities that constitute a sinful situation,"[40] thus marking a perceptible move to connect poverty to morality [4]. The restive population which endures living in these unjust situations is understood to be subject to increasing frustration.[41] While the bishops are critical of violent responses to this sinful situation, they nonetheless acknowledge that "some members of the dominant sectors occasionally resort to the use of force to repress drastically any attempt at opposition."[42] Going one step further, the bishops contend (somewhat provocatively) that the structural injustice in Latin America "can be called institutionalized violence . . . violating fundamental rights."[43] Quoting Pope Paul VI's *Homily of the Mass on Development Day* [Bogotá, 23 August 1968], the bishops repeat that instead of a response of violent action, "The dignity of man [*sic*] . . . demands that the necessary changes take place from within, that is to say, through a fitting awakening of conscience"[44] [5].

The appeal to reformation of conscience takes an interesting turn when the Latin American bishops consider failure to promote the peace of economic justice as itself a sin. The bishops point first to those who enjoy status, money and power as being primarily responsible for advancing the profound transformations that will be necessary to bring

---

[40]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 71.

[41]"Excessive inequalities systematically prevent the satisfaction of the legitimate aspirations of the ignored sectors, and breed increasing frustrations"; CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 72.

[42]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 72.

[43]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 78.

[44]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 78.

justice to Latin America. But they are not the only persons who bear an obligation to rectify economic inequities [3]; those who allow the disparate situation to continue are also charged: "Also responsible for [perpetuating] injustice are those who remain passive for fear of the sacrifice and personal risk implied by any courageous and effective action."[45] While not labeling such inactivity directly a sin of omission, the Latin American bishops are clearly identifying an instance of culpability when they morally target those who allow *una situación de pecado* to perdure. The role of the ecclesial hierarchy in this matter is defined thus: "To us, the Pastors of the Church, belongs the duty to educate the Christian conscience,"[46] specified subsequently in terms of actions which promote both conscientization and integral development.

In topic no. 4, "Education," the bishops advocate an extension of education at all levels, especially for the marginalized masses who are still largely illiterate and who have limited access to formal schooling. Interestingly, they see the liberalization of educational opportunity, something deemed critical to the transformation of the Latin American peoples, in a highly personalistic way: as central to the human right of all people to be "authors of their own progress."[47] The bishops of the Second General Conference derive

---

[45]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 79. {"Son, también, responsables de la injusticia todos los que *no actúan en favor de la justicia con los medios de que disponen y,* [this italicized text—"do not act on behalf of justice with those means at their disposal and who"—is not translated in the English text] permanecen pasivos por temor a los sacrificios y a los riesgos personales que implica toda acción audaz y verdaderamente eficaz"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, *II Conclusiones*, 73.}

[46]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 80.

[47]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 98.

their support for educational *concientización*, which "converts the student into the subject of his own development,"[48] from a theological anthropology based on the concept of liberation: "Because all liberation is [also] an anticipation of the complete redemption of Christ, the Church in Latin America is particularly in favor of all educational efforts which tend to free our people."[49]

In topic no. 5, "Youth," the Latin American bishops recognize both the challenge and promise of young people of their countries and the need to listen to their yearnings while still guiding them in their Christian formation. The bishops acknowledge as particularly legitimate one of the critiques emanating from youth—that the hierarchical church colludes with the oppressive economic powers of the surrounding society; rectifying this problem is accounted for specifically in one of their Pastoral Recommendations: "That the Church in Latin America should be manifested, in an increasingly clear manner, as truly poor, missionary and paschal, separate from all temporal power and courageously committed to the liberation of each and every man."[50] This matter of the witness of evangelical poverty on the part of the hierarchy of the church will be attested to more fully later in *Conclusions*.

---

[48]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 99.

[49]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 100.

[50]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 114. {"Que se presente cada vez más nítido en Latinoamérica el rostro [= *face*] de una Iglesia auténticamente pobre, misionera y pascual, desligada de todo poder temporal y audazmente comprometida en la liberación de todo el hombre y de todos los hombres"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, II *Conclusiones*, 108.}

"Evangelization and Growth in the Faith" [Topics 6-9]
Evangelizacion y crecimiento de la fe

Using terminology that reflects the very divide existing in Latin American society and culture, topic no. 7, "Pastoral Concern for the Elites," assumes a mature (if defective) faith in those who exercise power in Latin American society. The "elites"—the leaders in the professions, business, politics, industry, and the military—are seen as falling into three types: the traditionalists or conservatives, the evolutionists or advocates of development, and the revolutionaries, Marxist and others. The first group, in particular, comes in for a withering critique by the episcopal conference, especially as regards the awakening of conscience deemed critical to promoting progress against injustice [3]:

> The Traditionalists or Conservatives show little or no social conscience, have a middle-class orientation and consequently do not question the social structures. In general they are primarily concerned with preserving their privileges, which they identify with the "established order." Their community action takes the character of paternalism and almsgiving, with no concern for changing the status quo.[51]

Thus, the bishops of CELAM II see the inherited social circumstances of the privileged elites as negatively impacting their exercise of moral agency [1]. The bishops identify the moral problem of those who hold power in Latin America as a "dichotomy between faith and social responsibility," with the relevance of the church in their lives understood as merely "a matter of tradition and of self-interest"[52] [2]. While neither social nor personal sin is mentioned by the bishops, they do call for an evangelization of the elites which "must

---

[51]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 130.

[52]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 131.

clearly delineate in eschatological perspectives the values of justice and brotherhood so deeply embedded in the aspirations of the common people."[53] The episcopal conference is quite clear that the move here is not simply for more charity from the rich toward the poor; rather, the focus of the church must be to actually re-orient the organizations and groups which comprise the elites so that they, in turn, will make "a commitment on the level of socio-economic structures leading to their transformation"[54] [5].

"The Visible Church and its Structures" [Topics 10-16]
    La iglesia visible y sus estructuras

The CELAM II bishops argue in topic no. 10, "Lay Movements," that because the province of the laity is the historical world of the present, it is they who must effect the structural transformation necessary to bring about economic justice to the poor [3]. The bifurcation of roles between laity and clergy in rectifying social sin is further highlighted in sections below relating to the various groups of professed persons within the church.

The situation of having too many priests in developed parishes, while not enough are serving in needy areas, is acknowledged by the Latin American bishops as a major problem in topic no. 11, entitled "Priests." Reprising the words of *Gaudium et spes* that Christians should "integrate human, domestic, professional, scientific and technical enterprises with

---

[53]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 132.

[54]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 134.

religious values,"[55] the bishops of the Second General Conference cast the role of the clergy primarily in what might be termed an *adjunctive service* to the laity: "To promote the integral development of man, they [priests] will educate and encourage the laity to participate actively and with a Christian conscience in the technique and elaboration of progress."[56] This indirect role is specified, in fact, in the very next sentence they specify that "in the economic and social order, however, and especially in the political order, where a variety of concrete choices is offered, the priest, as priest, should not directly concern himself with decisions or leadership nor with the structuring of solutions."[57] Nonetheless, just a few paragraphs later, the bishops seem to promote extreme clerical involvement as they urge priests "to work as never before for the unity of all men, even to the extent of giving their lives for them according to the example of the Good Shepherd."[58] These rather divergent exhortations are not further explained or ever really reconciled.

In a subsequent important sub-section of topic no. 11 called "Life-Style" (*Estilo y subsistencia*), the bishops of the Second General Conference declare "evangelical poverty" as "one of the indispensable characteristics of priestly spirituality."[59] In that regard, they

[55]*Gaudium et spes*, §78, 943.

[56]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 179.

[57]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 179-80.

[58]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 180.

[59]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 182. The splendor of certain priests' life-styles amid the mass of poor people around them was deemed a manifestation of social sin and so became a particular critique of liberation theology's [4]. The issue is discussed again by the bishops in more detail in a section following below (topic no. 14), "Poverty of the Church."

urge priests to use their financial resources for the service of the poor, while still recognizing that some (unspecified) amount of income must be allowed priests in order for them to be able to perform their pastoral duties adequately.

Looking more broadly at other religious communities which compose the institutional church in Latin America (topic no. 12, "Religious"), the CELAM II bishops acknowledge the criticism made, often by youth, that the life of the religious is largely irrelevant to the integral development so desperately needed in Latin America. In response to this critique, the bishops recommend a renewal of the theological underpinnings for and daily practice of the religious so that they will "develop an awareness of the grave social problems of vast sectors of the people among whom we live."[60] Religious orders are urged to reevaluate their mission constantly in relation to the demands of justice and charity which are at the core of the gospel message. The importance of engaging in the real-world problems of the poor is made again in topic no. 13, "Formation of the Clergy," when the Second General Conference bishops observe that "today it is required that the priest be able habitually to interpret life situations and community demands in the light of the faith . . . [since] Latin American pastoral care is committed to the promotion of human betterment in order that each man [sic] reach self-realization and enjoy the goods of nature."[61]

Aware of the dichotomy in basic economic status between the clergy and the vast majority of the laity who are poor, the Latin American bishops engage in a discussion of this sensitive subject in topic no. 14, entitled "Poverty of the Church." The bishops argue here

[60]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 191.

[61]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 203, 204.

153

first of all that the image of a rich church is in many ways exaggerated. Still, they are forced to admit that members of the clergy do largely enjoy a life of security when compared to the poor, whose lives are marked by anguish and uncertainty. In their discourse on poverty, the bishops make the following distinctions: (1) economic poverty is itself evil and contrary to the will of God; (2) spiritual poverty, defined as opening up completely to hope in the Lord God for all good things, is good and desirable; (3) voluntary poverty by individuals in solidarity with those who lack material goods is the witness of Christ himself in the world and is, therefore, exemplary. While "a poor Church" (*una Iglesia pobre*) denounces the first type of poverty, exalts the second, and is bound to the third, in reality, "all members of the Church are called to live in evangelical poverty"[62]—although in diverse ways, given varying circumstances and particular charisms. With the example of Christ who himself became poor (cf. Phil 2:7), and in the context of the urgent situation in Latin America, the bishops declare the poverty of the church "to be a sign and a commitment" of the love of God for the poor: "An obligation of solidarity with those who suffer."[63]

In a subsequent section dealing with the large-scale organization of the church, the CELAM II bishops call for greater parity in apportioning the assets of the church; they state that in the task of bringing the good news to the poor, the "distribution of resources and apostolic personnel [ought to be one] that effectively gives preference to the poorest and most needy sectors."[64] In order to make the problems and struggles of the poor truly their

---

[62]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 215.

[63]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 216.

[64]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 216.

own [4], the bishops acknowledge that "we ought to sharpen the awareness of our duty of solidarity with the poor," adding further that this solidarity:

has to be concretized in criticism of injustice and oppression, in the struggle against the intolerable situation which a poor person often has to tolerate, in the willingness to dialogue with the groups responsible for that situation in order to make them understand their obligations.[65]

The bishops then give a list of aspirations for the clergy of Latin America, including modest housing and simpler life-styles, which will allow them to give a better testimony of poverty. Religious, too, are urged to live with the poor in a more comprehensive fashion. The bishops genuinely believe that "these authentic examples of detachment and freedom of spirit will make the other members of the People of God give a similar witness to poverty," arguing that "a sincere conversion has to change the individualistic mentality into another one of social awareness and concern for the common good"[66] [5]. This education in the Christian life should begin with children and in the home.

The bishops of the Second General Conference close their topic, "Poverty of the Church," with a reflection on what Christian service really means. In this section, though—and once again—the bishops are indeterminate about which moral actions might best rectify social sin [3], in particular the degree to which the church needs to be detached from and yet involved in the world and how exactly to achieve that delicate balance. While stressing that the Latin American church comprising various clerical communities wishes "to

---

[65]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 217.

[66]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 219. Cf. the second century letter known as the *Epistle of Barnabas* (4:10), "Do not live alone by retiring apart as if you were already made righteous, but come together and seek out the common good"; available at: http://www.scribd.com/doc/2515600/Epistle-of-Barnabas-Revised-English.

be free from temporal ties, from intrigues and from a doubtful reputation," the bishops still hope that the church's "mission of service will be stronger and clearer . . . [that it will] be present in life and in secular works, reflecting the light of Christ, present in the construction of the world," even going as far—and importantly so—as to offer as a prime example of this love of neighbor "when one organizes power and wealth for the benefit of the community."[67] How the individual priest or professed religious is to interpret these varyingly nuanced stances and choose her or his own *via media* is not amplified in the document itself.

As a series of more-or-less independent essays strung together, the sixteen topics covered in the Second General Conference of Latin American bishops are both broad and thin. They cover a lot of ground, to be sure, and come across as a sincere attempt to respond to the ambient crisis across the continent. But the topics are presented somewhat statically, one following the other, and they reflect also some hesitancy to lay out very specific plans of action. For that to occur, it would take eleven more years and another CELAM conference, this time in Puebla, Mexico.

<div align="center">

CELAM, Third General Conference of Latin American Bishops [Puebla], 1979
"Evangelization at Present and in the Future of Latin America"
La Evangelización en el presente y en el futuro de América Latina

</div>

Part One: Pastoral Overview of the Reality that is Latin America
        Visión Pastoral de la realidad Latinoamericana

---

[67]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 219.

The bishops of the 1979 Third General Conference begin their Pastoral Overview by observing the ever-widening distance, even more than was the case at the time of Medellín, between the rich and the poor. While fully cognizant of the problem, the CELAM III bishops draw away from major self-critique when they maintain (somewhat exoneratively) that "the Church in Latin America [meaning the hierarchy]. . . has made every effort to summon people to ongoing individual and social conversion."[68] Their early focus is clearly on the dimensions of moral responsibility in the face of poverty [3] [4]: referencing Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Populorum progressio* (§76), the bishops assert that if, and since, economic progress has been demonstrated as possible in Latin America, it should also "be possible to root out extreme poverty and improve our people's quality of life. If that is possible, it becomes an obligation."[69] The growing gap between rich and poor is called "a scandal and a contradiction to Christian experience . . . contrary to the plan of the Creator . . . the most devastating and humiliating kind of scourge."[70] The CELAM III bishops have no hesitancy in calling this state of affairs "sin" and appear only more troubled that such inequality could exist in Christian Latin America: "The Church sees a situation of social

---

[68]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 40.

[69]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 41.

[70]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 42. That economic injustice is contrary to the will of God is a notion also repeated in later sections of the text: the bishops call the economic disparity in Latin America "an insuperable obstacle to establishing the Reign of peace," and link it explicitly to the "power of sin in all its bitterness and extremes as something in flagrant contradiction to the divine plan"; CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 54, 60.

157

sinfulness [*sic*],[71] all the more serious because it exists in countries that call themselves

Catholic and are capable of changing the situation."[72]

Although the individual, both alone and in concert with others, is held responsible

for the dire conditions of mass poverty, the Latin American bishops nonetheless end up

giving a somewhat extrapersonal cast to the vaguely defined "situation of social sin": they

often use very concrete terms like "structures" and "mechanisms," which language tends to

objectify the problem outside of the person; how individuals relate to the "structures" or

how they can actually influence the "mechanisms" is not elaborated. The bishops also rely

on abstract concepts such as *materialism*, and often present these vices as able to be

overcome through sheer will and the exercise of offsetting virtues. Absent from their

consideration is any sociological analysis of how ideologies or "false consciousness" may in

---

[71]The matter of the somewhat frequent use of the term "sinfulness" in the official English edition of *Evangelization at Present and in the Future of Latin America* bears some attention. In actuality, the Latin America bishops use only and exclusively the word *pecado* when discussing those aspects of individual human action and corporate social activities which are contrary to the reign of God. The Spanish word for "sinfulness," *pecaminosidad*, is not to be found in any of the CELAM III texts. One possible explanation for this slightly discrepant linguistic detail may be that the Latin American bishops were comfortable extending the idea of "sin" to social situations perceived as in contradiction to the gospel; North American bishops translating the text, on the other hand, may have preferred keeping the distinction between "sin" and "sinfulness" (which somehow seems more abstract and less personally driven) because of concerns about the very question of how to relate moral agency to social sin, the subject of this dissertation. In terms of the papal magisterium, John Paul II would weigh in on the existential reality of social sin only five years later with his 1984 Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*.

[72]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 42. This same idea that greater moral responsibility obtains to those who profess to be followers of Jesus Christ is mentioned again later when the bishops affirm that the church "must raise its voice to denounce and condemn these situations [of gross inequity], particularly when the responsible officials or rulers call themselves Christians"; CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 43.

fact arise, or what might be the best means of overcoming the inducements to sin which come from the social milieu. The correct moral response to rectifying social sin [3] is often thrown back onto the individual to solve with the emphasis in the language more clearly on the goal to be achieved than on how exactly the person is to be converted away from idolatries: the bishops write that economic inequality is a "reality [which] calls for personal conversion and profound structural changes that will meet the legitimate aspirations of the people for authentic social justice,"[73] but do not clarify how this lofty goal is to be achieved. In the end, the Latin American bishops throw up their hands in desperation and are simply forced to admit that "we ourselves see that at bottom there lies a mystery of sinfulness [*sic*]."[74] Thus, unable to offer any effective counsel to counter the intractable causes of economic inequality, the bishops end up employing the familiar maneuver of blaming counter-evangelical cultural influences, with an added vague notion of group agency behind them, as being at the root of the problem: "The human person, called to have dominion over the world, impregnates the mechanisms of society with materialistic values."[75]

Even without having an exact prescription for overcoming the problem, the Latin American bishops are still sensitive about their own involvement in the social situation. To be sure, they note first of all, among their own there appears to be today "greater simplicity

[73]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 42.

[74]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 46. In this instance, the use of "sinfulness" on the part of the translators—instead of the more traditional phraseology, the "mystery of sin"—seems particularly lame here.

[75]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 46.

and poverty in the bishop's lifestyle."[76] Wishing to promote greater solidarity with the poor, the CELAM III bishops lay out a list of goals for society: a more just distribution of the wealth, goods, and opportunities of society, less political repression and intimidation, and most clearly, "Structural changes that will ensure a juster situation for the vast majority of the people."[77] This emphasis on the need for tangible action in reforming the structures of society is repeated over and over: in a subsection called "Evangelization in the Future," the bishops of the Third General Conference teach that the church not only "must become more and more independent of the powers in this world," but must also be faithful to its mission which includes "the fostering of those many and varied activities that lead the faithful to implement the moral imperatives deriving from the faith."[78] The Latin American bishops close Part One of their text—apparently still comfortable in the belief with which they began their Pastoral Overview, viz., that they have "made every effort to summon people to ongoing individual and social conversion"—by placing the ultimate responsibility for change [3] upon the laity: "They [lay persons] carry out the mission that is specifically

---

[76]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 52. Much later in the text, when the bishops are analyzing the phenomenon of base-level ecclesial communities (*comunidades eclesiales de base*), they note again that the institutional church is being transformed by its witness to the poor: "Bit by bit the Church has been dissociating itself from those who hold economic or political power, freeing itself from various forms of dependence, and divesting itself of privileges"; CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 124.

[77]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 53.

[78]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 54. In that regard, the bishops later confess that despite their efforts "to offer enlightenment and help . . . it is equally certain that we [the pastors of the church] could have done more," CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 73.

theirs, that is, when they are sent out into the very midst of life in the world as the Church's

vanguard, in order to remodel social, economic, and political structures in accordance with

God's plan."[79]

Part Two: God's Saving Plan for Latin America
          Designio de Dios sobre la realidad de América Latina

In a chapter called "The Content of Evangelization" (*Contenido de la*

Evangelización), the Latin American bishops begin their theological reflection by admitting

the challenge in formulating a way to acknowledge Christ "as the Lord of our history and

the source of inspiration for authentic social change [while still resisting] the efforts to

restrict him to the realm of the individual conscience."[80] Employing a theological

anthropology which derives from the dignity of the human person (established by creation

and ratified in the incarnation), the bishops call for a discipleship of ongoing conversion—in

both the personal and social domains—to restore the respect lost under economic

oppression:

> The Church . . . also professes the belief that every attack on human dignity is
> simultaneously an attack on God himself, whose image the human being is. Thus
> evangelization in Latin America's present and future demands that the Church voice a
> clear message about the dignity of the human being.[81]

---

[79]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 55.

[80]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 58-59.

[81]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 79.

The Latin American bishops later connect this notion of the dignity belonging to all persons

as creatures of God with the notion of the common good:

> We have a serious obligation to proclaim the dignity that properly belongs to all
> without distinction . . . [and to profess] that every human life deserves to be dignified
> in itself, in whatever circumstances; that all human life together must be grounded on
> the common good, which lies in the ever more fraternal realization of the common
> dignity of all.[82]

The bishops next provide a discourse on core topics of Christian belief along the

lines of the major Vatican II documents, and describe anew the gospel message to a fallen

world. "Sin, a force making for breakdown and rupture," they iterate, is comprised of a

single nature, but existent on two planes: "Within the hearts of human beings, and within the

various structures which they have created and on which they have left the destructive

imprint of their sinfulness [*sic*]."[83] Significantly, the CELAM III bishops teach that it is the

sin from "within" that creates the sin "without"; in other words, social sin is the direct result

of personal sin:

> Sinfulness [*sic*] on the personal level . . . is always mirrored on the level of
> interpersonal relations in a corresponding egotism, haughtiness, ambition, and envy.
> These traits produce injustice, domination, violence at every level, and conflicts
> between individuals, groups, social classes, and peoples. . . . Thus they establish sinful
> situations which, at the worldwide level, enslave countless human beings and adversely
> affect the freedom of all.[84]

---

[82]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 81.

[83]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 75. {"El pecado, fuerza de
ruptura . . . tanto desde el corazón de los hombres, come desde las diversas estructuras por
ellos creadas, en las cuales el pecado de sus autores ha impreso su huella destructora
[§281]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 100.}

[84]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 83.

This objectification of sin in the world necessitates, then, demonstrable action on behalf of the oppressed in order to overcome injustice:

> Authentic communion and participation can exist in this life only if they are projected on to the very concrete plan of temporal realities . . . in Latin America we cannot truly love our fellow human beings, and hence God, unless we commit ourselves on the personal level, and in many cases on the structural level as well, to serving and promoting the most dispossessed and downtrodden human groups and social classes, with all the consequences that will entail on the plane of temporal realities.[85]

Thus, the Latin American bishops affirm that only by taking into account "temporal realities" can the church, in fact, fully live out "the responsibility of reading the signs of the time and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel" (*Gaudium et spes* §4). Most importantly, the CELAM III bishops include into their responsibility of "reading" and "interpreting" the oppression they witness the promotion of concrete solutions "by simultaneously engaging in faithful proclamation and prophetic denunciation"; to that end, they exhort, "We all must try to discern the nature of situations and the concrete summonses of the Lord at any given point in time . . . [which] requires that we maintain an attitude of conversion and openness, and that we seriously commit ourselves to what we have discerned to be authentically evangelical."[86]

The bishops of the Third General Conference turn their attention next to the subject of evangelization in the Latin American context, fashioning a second complex chapter entitled "What Does Evangelizing Entail?" (*¿Que es Evangelizar?*). They identify the magisterium of the church—found "in the bosom of the community"—as playing a special

---

[85]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 83.

[86]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 85.

role in fostering evangelization: that of acting as "the court of decision [i.e., the authority

for decision-making], of authentic and faithful interpretation of the faith and moral law."[87]

Reflecting a point made by Pope Paul VI in the Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii nuntiandi*

(§18), the bishops once again affirm that exterior and qualitative changes are necessary

responses to any interior conversion; they teach that the goal of evangelization is "to bring

about a conversion that will serve as the basis for and guarantee of a transformation in

structures and the social milieu."[88] The methodology for this requisite conversion [5] is

spelled out more explicitly in a further iteration which—importantly—reverses the order

commonly given to the process of conversion, externalizing the initial step; the bishops

write that in order to achieve "the ongoing evangelical renewal and transformation of our

culture . . . the Gospel must penetrate the values and criteria that inspire our culture,

convert the human beings who live by these values, and insofar as it is necessary, change the

structures in which they live and express themselves so that they may be more fully

---

[87]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 90.

[88]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 91. This same point is made again in a later section when the bishops describe the broad compass of the church's social teaching: "The whole Christian community is called upon to assume responsibility for concrete options and their effective implementation in order to respond to the summons [issues] presented by changing circumstances," CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 103. {"Toda la comunidad cristiana es llamada a hacerse responsable de las opciones concretas y de su efectiva actuación para responder a las interpelaciones que las cambiantes circunstancias le presentan [§473]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 135.} It is important to remember here that the Spanish word *opción* [pl. *opciones*] carries more the meaning of "a plan of action" or "a course to be taken" than is suggested by the literal translation in English of *option*, meaning "choice."

human."[89] Moreover, the effects of conversion are dynamic; they end up influencing on an even deeper level those who respond to the Gospel message in the first place. The Latin American bishops describe how the structures of society, once transformed by an authentically converted people, should then function to support ongoing transformation:

> The Church thus calls for a new conversion on the level of cultural values, so that the structures of societal life may then be imbued with the spirit of the Gospel. And while it calls for a revitalization of evangelical values, it simultaneously urges a rapid and thoroughgoing transformation of structures. For by their very nature these structures are supposed to exert a restraining influence on the evil that arises in the human heart and manifests itself socially; and they are also meant to serve as conditioning pedagogical factors for an interior conversion on the plane of values.[90]

The bishops of the Third General Conference frequently use the term "faith" to describe what might otherwise be termed "Gospel fidelity": that is, the internalization of the Word which results in interior conversion and exterior changes that benefit the poor. Evincing absolute conviction in the power of the Gospel message to effect change, they write: "Undoubtedly situations of injustice and acute poverty are an indictment in

[89]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 92. The exact mechanism by which the preaching of the Gospel is best able to "penetrate" the values of the culture which then change human hearts is not actually articulated by the Latin American bishops. When such evangelical pervasion does not occur, however, the bishops charge the leaders of society for a "faith [that] was not strong enough" (see text footnoted no. 91 below). Their basic point, though, that the ethics of the social milieu must change *first*, and that personal conversion *results* from this exterior cultural influencing, is both novel and worth thoughtful consideration.

[90]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 98. Although the Third General Conference held that societal structures currently bear "the destructive imprint of their [human beings'] sinfulness" (§281), Margaret Pfeil is correct when she points out that ultimately the bishops' "understanding of the integral relationship between structural transformation and personal conversion is a fundamentally positive conception of the role of structures within society"; Pfeil, "The Language of Social Sin," 90. Thus, the bishops' teaching here is that societal structures, when informed by gospel values, can actually further ethical action—which, in turn, can then positively change society itself even more.

themselves, indicating that the faith was not strong enough to affect the criteria and the decisions of those responsible for ideological leadership and the organization of our people's socio-economic life together."[91] As at Medellín,[92] the Latin American bishops at Puebla readily divide their appraisal of the world around them along class lines; they lay the responsibility for unjust structures—which result in equal measure, they aver, from both liberal capitalism and Marxist collectivism—squarely at the feet of those who hold power in Latin America: "They arise out of the ideologies of the dominant cultures, and they are inconsistent with the faith that is part of our people's culture."[93]

When the bishops of CELAM III turn to the question of liberation in Christ, they declare that first and foremost the term signifies "liberation from all the forms of bondage, from personal and social sin, and from everything that tears apart the human individual and society," noting that "all this finds its source to be in egotism, in the mystery of iniquity."[94] The bishops appear to understand that liberation is necessary to "transform human beings into active subjects of their own individual and communitarian development," although they insist still that the first goal is "liberation from sin and all its seductions and idolatry."[95]

---

[91]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 97.

[92]See "Pastoral Care of the Masses and the Elite," CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 1*, Position Papers*.

[93]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 98. The church is depicted later (§551, §552) as beholden to neither Marxist nor capitalist economic systems, but rather existing above and beyond ideologies since it is based on gospel truths and eschatological hopes.

[94]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 104-5.

[95]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 105.

Eschewing both violence and class struggle as solutions to the problem, the bishops affirm that this liberation can actually be achieved best by "evangelical means, which have their own distinctive efficacy"; this so-called *liberative evangelization* relies on "the vigorous energy and activity of Christians, who are moved by the Spirit to respond to the cries of countless millions of their brothers and sisters."[96]

The CELAM III bishops reiterate the church's long held teaching on the non-absolute nature of ownership, i.e., on the conditional right to property: the goods of the earth are to be considered gifts from God, and so, privileges accruing from them belong to all. The bishops go on to charge that "the cruel contrast between luxurious wealth and extreme poverty . . . shows the great extent to which our nations are dominated by the idol of wealth."[97] While authority and structure are both natural to and necessary for society, "sin corrupts humanity's use of power"[98] and leads to abuse of rights, especially in the political domain. It is in order to counter the corruption of sin that it proves meet for the church to become involved in the political dimension of human societal life.

The Latin American bishops draw a sharp distinction, though, between the role of the laity, for whom party politics is a proper activity, and that of the clergy, for whom unity

---

[96]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 105.

[97]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 107.

[98]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 107. Later, the bishops amplify the measure of sin's corrosive effects when they write that the Gospel "is a liberating message because it saves us from the bondage of sin, which is the root and source of all oppression, injustice, and discrimination," CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 109.

of message and being politically *dégagé* are most important.[99] Clerical responsibility should be limited to "contributing to their [the laity's] adequate formation and their spiritual life . . . nurturing their creativity so that they can explore options that are increasingly in line with the common good and the needs of the weakest."[100] The bishops go on to condemn all forms of violence, be they generated by the authorities or by rebel guerrillas. Furthermore, they warn against radical reform in the absence of substantive spiritual transformation when they quote verbatim (in §534) Pope Paul VI's remark from *Evangelii nuntiandi* §36 that "even the best structures and the most idealized systems quickly become inhuman if human inclinations are not improved, if there is no conversion of heart and mind on the part of those who are living in those structures or controlling them."[101]

Part Three: Evangelization in the Latin American Church: Communion and Participation
La evangelización en la Iglesia de América Latina: comunión y participación

Beginning with the family or domestic church as the foundational element in establishing the spread of the Gospel, the bishops pledge themselves, in a manner very similar to the so-called *adjunctive service* afforded the laity at Medellín,[102] to "educate all

---

[99]Cf., CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, topic no. 10, "Lay Movements," and topic no. 11, "Priests" (discussed above, pp. 149-50).

[100]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 110.

[101]See CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 112.

[102]Cf., CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, topic no. 11, "Priests," §18, §19.

family members in justice and love so that they can be responsible, solidary, and effective

agents in promoting Christian solutions for the complex social issue in Latin America."[103]

The formally professed members of the church, i.e., "the religious," are summoned

to give ongoing witness to the Gospel; this call to manifest evangelical values the bishops

dub *a preferential option for the poor*, coining the phrase that would become paradigmatic

for a major shift in modern theological thinking. The bishops of CELAM III go on to

explain exactly what they mean by the term: "Pastoral openness in one's labors and a

preferential option for the poor represent the most noticeable tendency of religious life in

Latin America. . . . This option does not imply exclusion of anyone, but it does imply a

preference for the poor and a drawing closer to them."[104] However preferred the claim of

the poor might be, the Latin American bishops are still careful to caution those consecrated

to the religious life not to become too involved in particular issues or solutions relating to

the welfare of the poor. The dividing line between Catholic priest and Catholic action is to

be rigorously maintained:

> As a pastor committed to the integral liberation of the poor and the oppressed, the
> priest always operates with evangelical criteria (EN:18).[105] He believes in the force of
> the Spirit so as not to fall into the temptation of becoming a political leader, social

---

[103]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 123.

[104]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 136. Later in the text
(§754), the Latin American bishops reiterate this notion using Pope John Paul II's words on
the topic, given in his Address to Priests (27 January 1979, Basilica of Guadalupe, §7):
"[Religious give themselves] with a love that is non-partisan and that excludes no one, even
though it is directed to the poorest by way of preference."

[105]See Pope Paul VI's Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii nuntiandi*, §18.

director, or functionary of some temporal authority.[106] For that would prevent him from being "a sign and factor of unity and fraternity."[107]

Nevertheless, the witness of the religious, especially by living in poverty and sharing their goods with each other and the poor, is a powerful "evangelical denunciation of those who serve money and power, who egotistically keep back for themselves the goods that God has given to humanity for the benefit of the whole community."[108]

When they turn their attention to the laity, the CELAM III bishops teach that since they are situated in the world, lay people bear primary responsibility for the establishment of God's reign in its earthly dimension (§787). This duty is cast as a serious moral obligation not to be temporized: "Lay people cannot excuse themselves from a serious commitment to promote justice and the common good."[109] Quoting verbatim (in §793) from Pope John

---

[106]This list of dangerous social roles to be avoided by the clergy is taken from the next section (§8) of that same allocution of Pope John Paul II's (Address to Priests, 27 January 1979, Basilica of Guadalupe,) quoted above. A bit later in their text, the bishops of CELAM III mention the same tripartite list once again, this time using an even fuller quotation from the papal Address to Priests; they write: "We pledge to encourage religious to assume a preferential commitment to the poor, keeping in mind the words of John Paul II: 'You are priests and religious; you are not social directors, political leaders, or functionaries of some temporal authority. So I repeat: Let us not entertain the delusion that we are serving the Gospel if we are trying to 'dilute' our charism through an exaggerated interest in the broad field of temporal problems"; CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 140.

[107]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 133. The phrase in quotes also comes from Pope John Paul II's Address to Priests (27 January 1979, Basilica of Guadalupe, §8).

[108]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 138.

[109]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 143. In this section, the bishops reference the Vatican II document *Apostolicam actuositatem* (Decree on the Apostolate of the Lay People) which reads in part: "In their patriotism and in their fidelity to their civic duties Catholics will feel themselves bound to promote the true common good;

Paul II's Address to Workers in Guadalajara (30 January 1979, §2), the bishops draw

further attention to the necessarily close connection between talk of justice and action taken

in order to effect it: "It is not enough for Christians to denounce injustices. They are also

required to be truly witnesses to, and agents of, justice." An additional note the bishops

make is that the evangelizing activity of the laity will, in fact, also contribute to the scrutiny

and development of the church's social teaching (§795). Towards the end of their analysis

of the role of lay persons in evangelization, the Latin American bishops offer a sharp

critique of the blinding effects that structural social sin has on moral conscience [1]; and

they press the laity to move beyond the status quo and to become the prime agents of social

analysis and change [3]:

> Finally, a fact of particular seriousness is the insufficient effort invested in discerning the causes and conditionings of social reality, particularly with regard to the means and instruments for transforming society. This is needed to shed light on the activity of Christians if they are to avoid uncritical assimilation of ideologies on the one hand or a spirituality of evasion on the other. This also enables them to go beyond mere denunciation and to find courses of action.[110]

When they evaluate the liturgy, the bishops seem willing to share in the blame themselves

for the frequent lack of transformative energy, noting that "participation in the liturgy does

not have an adequate impact on the social commitment of Christians"; they even go so far

---

they will make the weight of their convictions so influential that as a result civil authority will be justly exercised and laws will accord with the moral precepts and the common good"; *Apostolicam actuositatem*, §14, 782. The contention expressed here is that if enough good Catholics exercise their lay roles in civil society in an evangelical manner as they ought, justice and equality will surely—and somewhat automatically—result.

[110]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 146. This most thoughtful passage will be discussed in chapter four below in the context of discernment as to the causes of social sin as well as insight on how to encourage its rectification.

as to admit that "sometimes the liturgy is used as a tool in ways that disfigure its evangelizing value."[111]

The same point about the importance of the liturgy as a tool for conversion is brought up again when the CELAM III bishops write: "The liturgy is also a force operative in our wayfaring pilgrimage so that we, through a life-transforming commitment, can bring about the full realization of the Kingdom in accordance with God's plan."[112] Personal witness to the values of the Gospel is called into moral scrutiny when the Latin American bishops all but label as sinful [2] actions by those who "have demonstrated a faith with little strength to overcome their egotism, their individualism, and their greedy hold on riches. They have acted unjustly and injured the unity of society and the Church itself."[113]

One of the arguments made against the concept of social sin is that structures do not sin—people do. Yet the bishops of CELAM III seem to suggest a kind of disembodied moral agency and incorporeal corruptive force when they decry the encroaching secularism of the modern world found on college campuses and give it a kind of personalist intentionality: "The ideologies that are in vogue know that universities are an ideal place for them to infiltrate and to gain control over culture and society."[114] These ideologies, especially as manipulated by the media, distort social values and create rampant consumerism and competition where evangelical love should reign (§1073). More

---

[111]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 154.

[112]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 156.

[113]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 159.

[114]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 168.

pointedly, the bishops envision the church boldly lifting its voice to operate as an alternative to the prevailing societal communication of selfishness: "Knowing the situation of poverty, marginalization, and injustice in which large masses of Latin Americans are immersed, and also being aware of the violations of human rights, in its use of its own media the Church must more and more each day become the voice of the dispossessed, even at the risk entailed."[115]

Part Four: A Missionary Church Serving Evangelization in Latin America
Iglesia misionera al servicio de la evangelización en América Latina

In this penultimate part of the Final Document, the CELAM III bishops consider the church as mission. Using the word *option* (*opción*) to describe their concrete plans of action, the bishops reprise their discussion of the preferential option for the poor in a chapter so titled (§1134-65). Their discourse here extends the implications of the concept beyond what had been presented earlier (in §721-§726) when the notion was discussed in relation to the consecrated life. In this relatively brief chapter (it is only four pages), the bishops lay out both the rationale for and purpose of giving preference to the poor, beginning with the bold declaration: "We affirm the need for conversion on the part of the whole Church to a preferential option for the poor, an option aimed at their integral

---

[115]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 173.

liberation."[116] This need for radical and continual conversion [5] is given fuller expression a

few sections later when the bishops acknowledge:

> Not all of us in the Latin American Church have committed ourselves sufficiently to the poor. We are not always concerned about them, or in solidarity with them. Service to them really calls for constant conversion and purification among all Christians. That must be done if we are to achieve fuller identification each day with the poor Christ and our own poor.[117]

That "identification each day with the poor Christ"—presumably necessary for our own

salvation, and not merely optional—gives to the poor, then, a special role in redemption.

This notion, sometimes articulated as *the gift of the poor*, is mentioned by the bishops of

CELAM III later when they gratefully acknowledge: "Commitment to the poor and

oppressed and the rise of grassroots communities [base-level ecclesial communities] have

helped the Church to discover the evangelizing potential of the poor. For the poor

challenge the Church constantly, summoning it to conversion."[118]

In articulating the moral response required to rectify social sin in terms of both

personal decisions and collective action [3], the Latin American bishops differentiate justice

from charity. Repeating verbatim a portion of the "Decree on the Apostolate of Lay

---

[116]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 178. Interestingly, the bishops of the Third General Conference claim no originality to their thinking in making this declaration; in fact, they unhesitatingly attribute the idea of a preferential option for the poor to the CELAM meeting having occurred eleven years earlier in Medellín: "With renewed hope in the vivifying power of the Spirit, we are going to take up once again the position of the Second General Conference of the Latin American episcopate in Medellín, which adopted a clear and prophetic option expressing preference for, and solidarity with, the poor"; CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 178.

[117]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 178.

[118]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 179.

People" (*Apostolicam actuositatem*) they iterate the important distinction which the Fathers

at the Second Vatican Council made: "The demands of justice must first of all be satisfied;

that which is already due in justice is not to be offered as a gift of charity. The causes of

evils, and not merely their effects, ought to disappear. The aid contributed should be

organized in such a way that beneficiaries are gradually freed from their dependence on

others and become self-supporting."[119] Thus, not only must the economic justice due the

poor "first of all be satisfied," but it also is not to be confused with the exercise of Christian

charity, a secondary or corollary activity. More pointedly, the strategies for fulfilling these

very "demands of justice" must be fashioned to be liberative, allowing the poor to move

toward self-sufficiency and not to have to rely on continuing charity.[120]

The Third General Conference bishops, as was noted earlier in relation to §733,

teach that a preference for the poor should not to be understood as exclusion of any other

persons (cf. §1165). The preference, rather, is based on the example of Jesus Christ himself

whose birth, life, and death were all attested in poverty. Furthermore, it was to the poor

that the Son of God directed his life's mission of delivering the "good news" (§1141-42).

Poverty, then, is more than one thing: for those whose marginalization give them no other

choice but to live in privation, it is a burden; but, when embraced voluntarily, poverty

becomes a virtue, a model of living which places reliance on God before attachment to the

---

[119]*Apostolicam actuositatem*, §8, 776; this citation itself occurs in §1146 of CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 179.

[120]Cf. the Vatican II document, "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World": in urging a generous sharing of resources, the Fathers extol in particular "aid which will enable them [people . . . suffering from want] to help and develop themselves"; *Gaudium et spes*, §69, 976.

175

world (§1148-52). This *evangelical poverty* (*la pobreza evangélica*) is touted because it fosters moral excellence: "The attitude of the Christian should be that of a person who uses the goods of this world (whose makeup [framework] is transitory) without absolutizing them, since they are only means to reach the Kingdom."[121] This ideal is often manifest in the middle-class members of the church: "Evangelical poverty is also carried out in practice through the giving and sharing of material and spiritual goods,"[122] the bishops write—though they do not delineate how this detachment from materialism differs exactly from giving in charity. In sum, the preferential option for the poor is seen as one of the basic proclamations of Christ the Savior (§1153): it simultaneously frees the poor from the indignity of destitution which can foster "the false ideals of a consumer society," and likewise liberates the rich from secular attachment to the things of this world, "freeing them from this bondage and their own egotism."[123] The end result of this dual and dynamic sort of conversion is the establishment of fraternal communion here upon earth (§1154). Importantly, the Latin American bishops tie the necessary structural changes needed to effect economic justice to internal changes in attitude about what is, in fact, the real goal in living—all part of an ongoing process of conversion:

> The required change in unjust social, political, and economic structures will not be authentic and complete if it is not accompanied by a change in our personal and

---

[121]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 180.

[122]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 180.

[123]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 181.

collective outlook [mentality] regarding the idea of a dignified, happy human life. This in turn, disposes us to undergo conversion.[124]

In the next chapter of Part Four ("A Preferential Option for Young People") the Latin American bishops begin by saluting youth for their refreshing desire for renewal and change (§1168-69). They analyze both the idealism of youth and the contradictory fact that they often collude with the dominant culture—though noting, too, that "many other young people are forced to work as if they were adults because of their poverty."[125] Hope for youth is based on "the spirit of the Beatitudes [which] enables all young people to be immersed in a process of ongoing conversion."[126] The role of the hierarchical church is to foster in youth growth in their faith, increased participation in the church, and support for their transformation of society (§1187). This pastoral "preferential option" will then encourage young people to show a preference for the poorest (§1188). Once again, the bishops draw a straight line from pastoral work in support of youth, through their education in the true liberation which comes only from Jesus Christ, to their personal conversion which, in turn, leads directly to the evangelization and transformation of the society at large. The spiritual development of young people, fostered by filial affection for the Virgin Mary, will ensure that they will avoid both the pitfalls of cultural counter-values as well as the manipulations of liberal capitalism or Marxism. The bishops pledge an openness to youth and willingness to give them their due place within the church.

---

[124]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 180.

[125]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 183.

[126]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 184.

In the third chapter of this section on the Missionary Church ("Church Collaboration with the Builders of a Pluralistic Society in Latin America"), the CELAM III bishops delineate their own plan of action vis-à-vis the powerful forces in the world around them. Identifying "a grave structural conflict"[127] in the ambient society, the bishops reiterate the main outlines of the growing disparity between the poor and the rich, though noting also some growth in the middle classes (§1208). While acknowledging the legitimate presence of a plurality of views in regard to the future direction of society ("the autonomy of terrestrial realities"), the bishops nevertheless "demand for the Church the right to bear witness to its message and to use its prophetic word of annunciation and denunciation in an evangelical sense, i.e., to correct false images of society that are incompatible with the Christian vision."[128] Thus, in articulating their response to the inequity of social sin [3], the bishops focus on the false ideologies which legitimate and sustain it, and lay out for themselves the responsibility for the conscientization of the larger society wherein faithless values ("false images") lead to structural inequalities. In their pastoral response, the Latin American bishops aver that there is but one evangelical message, one word that comes from God through Jesus Christ—not one message for the elites and a different one for the masses. To that end they advocate both a "preferential concern" [*preocupación preferencial*] for the rights of the poor (§1217) and a "preferential concern" for young people as a transformative force in the society (§1218), to which they also add an important role for women (§1219). In addition to exhorting and motivating groups within the society

---

[127]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 187.

[128]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 187.

to change, the hierarchy is tasked with urging the faithful laity (the "common people") themselves "to serve as agents of a general consciousness-raising about the common responsibility, in the face of a challenge that requires the participation of all."[129]

Next, the CELAM III bishops return to the topic of conversion, beginning first with a look inward at themselves. Referencing Pope Paul VI's Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii nuntiandi* (§41), they confess: "We realize that structural transformation is the outward expression of inner conversion. We know that this conversion begins with ourselves. Without the witness of a converted Church, our word as pastors would be futile."[130] The Latin American bishops then articulate their own role in the response necessary to rectifying social sin [3], one which involves what may be termed *indirect interaction* in the temporal realm (§1226-28). The bishops envision their function as leading the whole Christian community to build "a bridge of contact and dialogue with the builders of temporal society, in order to enlighten them with the Christian vision."[131] Working with these "constructors of society" and listening to their concerns, the bishops pledge, by means of reference to the church's social teaching, to fashion an "elaboration of a social ethics capable of formulating Christian answers to the major problems of contemporary culture."[132] While the bishops acknowledge the social tensions inherent in the divide between rich and poor, it is, they

[129]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 188.

[130]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 188. Cf. the statement of the bishops of the Second General Conference found in Part 1 of *Conclusions* ("Justice" §3), quoted earlier in this chapter (footnoted no. 37).

[131]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 188.

[132]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 188-89.

argue, nonetheless incumbent upon the church to foster dialogue and work closely "with those who have decision-making power."[133]

Reiterating some of the main points made earlier, the Latin American bishops see the current situation around them as a result of sin operating within both individuals and society: "There are many causes for this situation of injustice; but at the root of them all we find sin, both on the personal level and in structures themselves."[134] In their solution to promoting the fundamental rights of the marginalized, the bishops see their role primarily as hortatory: "The Church, the expert in humanity . . . faced with the situation of sin . . . has a duty to engage in denunciation . . . [which] must be objective, courageous, and evangelical."[135] The participants of the Third General Conference then go on to catalogue a number of human rights to be upheld as an integral part of the church's evangelizing mission (§1270-79). In the success of that task, the Latin American bishops hope to rely upon the good will of the international community to "ensure the free and direct access of the weakest to their integral development"; they envision a new world order wherein "economic surpluses, the savings from disarmament, and all other wealth on which there is a 'social

---

[133]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 189.

[134]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 192.

[135]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 194. The phrase used to describe the church here as "expert in humanity," may be borrowed from Pope John Paul II who fashions just this depiction of *la Iglesia* in a homily given in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic on 25 January 1979: "The Church, an expert in humanity, faithful to the signs of the times, and in obedience to the pressing call of the last Council, wishes to continue today her mission of faith and defense of human rights."

mortgage,' even on the international level, will have to be utilized for social purposes."[136]

While still holding as important "proclaiming" and "denouncing," in the end the Latin

American bishops define their own role primarily as one of conscience-formation: "The

Church should create an ethical conscience with regard to the major international

problems."[137] The CELAM III bishops close Part Four with specification of several actions

to be taken—reform of economic policies, increasing quotas for immigration, and the

like—all listed under one last plea: "The Church makes an urgent appeal to the conscience

of peoples and to humanitarian organizations."[138]

Part Five: Under the Dynamism of the Spirit: Pastoral Options
             Bajo el dinamismo del Espíritu: Opciones Pastorales

The Final Document of the Third General Conference of Latin American Bishops

concludes with a brief review of the plan of action put forth to be acted upon. Part Five is

only three pages long, and it reprises past conclusions more than specifying anything new.

Although their "continent is Christian down to its very core," the bishops readily admit that

"the faith, as a norm of life and a total way of living together, does not have the desired

impact on the personal and social conduct of many Christians."[139] The role of the church is

---

[136]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 195.

[137]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 195.

[138]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 196.

[139]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 197-98.

cast as one of "denouncing situations of sin; summoning people to conversion; and committing believers to world-transforming action. . . . We must create in the people of Latin America a sound moral conscience, a critical-minded evangelical sense [consciousness] vis-à-vis reality, a communitarian spirit, and a social commitment."[140] Only then will humankind be successful in "the construction of a new society that is truly human and suffused with evangelical values."[141]

The clarion call has been made: the CELAM III bishops have laid out a rationale for change that is based on new attitudes and new behaviors in a Christian people newly evangelized. The language used by the bishops is alive with energy: "conversion," "world-transforming action," "moral conscience," "communitarian spirit" and "social commitment." But the post-Vatican II torch of reform now passes from episcopate to pope, from Latin America to Rome. As will be seen in the second part of this chapter, many of the same issues and concerns of the Latin American bishops will be addressed by John Paul II, although his pronouncements, given with a universal audience in mind, are often fashioned with a different perspective on these various core topics, as will be demonstrated next.

---

[140]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 198-99. {"Denunciando las situaciones de pecado, llamando a la conversión y comprometiendo a los creyentes en la acción transformadora del mundo [§1305]. . . . Es necesario crear en el hombre latinoamericano una sana conciencia moral, sentido evangélico crítico frente a la realidad, espíritu comunitario y compromiso social [§1308]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 267.}

[141]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 199. {"La construcción de la nueva sociedad verdaderamente humana y penetrada de valores evangélicos [§1308]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 267.}

Papal Texts of John Paul II

Writings from the 1980s

Reconciliatio et paenitentia ("Reconciliation and Penance"), 1984 Apostolic Exhortation

Seven years into his pontificate, John Paul II issued his post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Reconciliatio et paenitentia* ("On Reconciliation and Penance In the Mission of the Church Today") on 2 December 1984. As noted earlier, the Apostolic Exhortation was meant to provide both summary of and conclusion to the work done by the Sixth General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops of a year earlier. That episcopal meeting itself grew out of concerns stretching back at least as far as the Second Vatican Council which had authorized a major reform of the Rite of Penance (*Misericordiam suam*, issued in 1974). Although not bearing quite the authority of an encyclical, an apostolic exhortation is both "exhortative and legislative in nature," Margaret Pfeil remarks, and as such it "represents a significant exercise of the ordinary universal magisterium . . . [carrying] authoritative weight for the whole church"[142]

Pope John Paul II begins by setting out the reason for issuing the document, which is broad in scope and pastoral in nature: "The concern to know better and to understand modern man [*sic*] and the contemporary world, to solve their puzzle and reveal their mystery, to discern the ferments of good and evil within them, has long caused many people

[142]Pfeil, "The Language of Social Sin," 137.

to direct at man and the world a questioning gaze."[143] Reprising *Gaudium et spes* §4's

dictum about "reading the signs of the time and interpreting them in the light of the

Gospel," the pope observes both the "painful social phenomena of our times" and the

"divisions caused by differing opinions in the doctrinal and pastoral field," finding their

cause to be "a wound in man's [*sic*] inmost self. In the light of faith we call it sin."[144]

Personal sin is understood by the pontiff to be the proximate cause of the disruption of

social accord, and so it is, then, that personal conversion comes to be seen "as the necessary

path to harmony between individuals."[145] The prime impetus for this reconciliation derives

from God alone (effected through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ) and thus

comes to humanity as pure divine gift (§5 [18], §7 [19]).[146] On the human side, the acts of

penance which follow from the reconciliation initiated by God are the hallmark and proof of

the conversion undergirding earthborn repentance or *metanoia*.

Pope John Paul II takes account of the relationship between personal sin and social

sin in Part Two of the Apostolic Exhortation. In its first chapter, entitled "The Mystery of

Sin," the pontiff draws a direct connection from the individual's "rupture with God . . . a

---

[143]Pope John Paul II, *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, §1, 7.

[144]Ibid., §2, 8, 9.

[145]Ibid., §4, 14. This highly individualized perspective of John Paul II's apparently softened over time: see the discussion below on some of the pope's writing from the1990s.

[146]"[The] 'vertical' dimension of division and reconciliation concerning the relationship between man [*sic*] and God . . . always prevails over the 'horizontal' dimension, that is to say, over the reality of division between people and the need for reconciliation between them. . . . The redemptive act of Christ . . . break[s] down the diving wall which sin had raised up between people"; ibid., §7, 21.

suicidal act . . . [in which one's] internal balance is also destroyed" right to the effects of

personal sin which cause "damage to the fabric of his [*sic*] relationship with others and with

the created world":

> Therefore one can speak of personal and social sin: From one point of view, every sin
> is personal; from another point of view, every sin is social insofar as and because it
> also has social repercussions.[147]

The outlines of hamartiology delineated by the pope above are refined more

explicitly in the next section of the Apostolic Exhortation (§16) in which he lays out several

types of social sin and their putative boundaries. At the core, John Paul II sees all sin as

private and therefore the responsibility of individuals in their discrete actions. Moral agency

is held to exist exclusively on the personal level since sin "is an act of freedom on the part of

an individual and not properly of a group or community."[148] Whatever external conditions

or inherent deficits of character may influence a person, and these factors—it is readily

acknowledged—"may attenuate, to a greater or lesser degree, the person's freedom and

therefore his [*sic*] responsibility and guilt" [1], human freedom "cannot be disregarded in

order to place the blame for individuals' sins on external factors such as structures, systems

---

[147]Ibid., §15, 35; cf. later in the text when the pope states that, "Each individual's sin in some way affects others" [§16, 36]. Jesuit theologian Michael Sievernich, however, would extend the boundaries of sinfulness much beyond initiating personal deeds; as a consequence, he comes to adopt a more wide-ranging appraisal of moral culpability: "[They] become subjectively guilty [of objective structural evils] who produce or maintain such 'arrangements,' make use of them, or are silent accomplices in their persistence," Michael Sievernich, "'Social Sin' and its Acknowledgment," *The Fate of Confession*, ed. Mary Collins and David N. Power, trans. J. G. Chumming, *Concilium* 190 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, Ltd, 1987), 56.

[148]Pope John Paul II, *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, §16, 35.

or other people."[149] Just as there is a communion of saints, there is also a "communion of

sin" whereby each and every personal sin harms "the entire ecclesial body and the whole

human family"; thus, concludes the pope, "every sin can undoubtedly be considered as

social sin."[150] This is the first and primary meaning of the term social sin, according to John

Paul II.

In addition to asserting that "every sin" is a social sin, the pope gives a second and

more specific meaning to social sin when he says that the term also encompasses those

direct acts of individuals which blatantly do specific harm to "one's brother or sister. They

are an offense against God because they are offenses against one's neighbor."[151] The pope

quickly expands the list of offenses covered under this definition of social sin to include all

sins "against justice in interpersonal relationships . . . against the rights of the human person

. . . against a person's physical integrity . . . against others' freedom . . . [even] against the

common good."[152] It is significant in relation to the matter of how individual actions

contribute to social sin [2] when John Paul II writes: "The term social can be applied to sins

of commission or omission . . . [by those] who though in a position to do so, do not work

---

[149]Ibid., §16, 36. The pope goes on to observe that "there is nothing so personal and untransferable in each individual as merit for virtue or responsibility for sin."

[150]Ibid., §16, 37.

[151]Ibid.

[152]Ibid. Interestingly, though not fully embracing the concept of corporate agency, John Paul II does hint at the existence of and implies a kind of single-minded intentionality accorded to plural subjects when he writes that these sins pertain when "committed either by the individual against the community or by the community against the individual"; ibid.

diligently and wisely for the improvement and transformation of society according to the requirements and potential of the given historical moment."[153]

A third understanding given by the pope to the term social sin is in relation to large social movements—class struggles, ethnic fighting, and confrontations between blocs of nations—frictions which threaten human justice, freedom, and peace. Despite the large-scale apparatus of such sinful strife, individual responsibility for the sin therein involved (mostly to be found in *not* helping to rectify the problem [3]) is not evaded:

> One may ask whether moral responsibility for these evils, and therefore sin, can be attributed to any person in particular. Now it has to be admitted that realities and situations such as those described, when they become generalized and reach vast proportions as social phenomena, almost always become anonymous, just as their causes are complex and not always identifiable. Hence if one speaks of social sin here, the expression obviously has an analogical meaning. However, to speak even analogically of social sins must not cause us to underestimate the responsibility of the individuals involved. It is meant to be an appeal to the consciences of all, so that each may shoulder his or her responsibility seriously and courageously in order to change those disastrous conditions and intolerable situations.[154]

---

[153]Ibid. This same point—sin as a failure to act to curb evil in the society around us [sin of omission]—is reiterated a few paragraphs later when the pope includes as instances of personal sin actions of "those who are in a position to avoid, eliminate or at least limit certain social evils but who fail to do so out of laziness, fear or the conspiracy of silence, through secret complicity or indifference; of those who take refuge in the supposed impossibility of changing the world and also of those who sidestep the effort and sacrifice required, producing specious reasons of higher order" (§16, 39). Cf., too, a similar rebuke ("one may also be found wanting") in John Paul II's concluding remarks to his encyclical, *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, written a few years later: there the pope chastises those who allow the urgent needs which arise out of underdevelopment to perdure "through *fear*, *indecision*, and, basically, through *cowardice*"; Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, §47, 429.

[154]Pope John Paul II, *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, §16, 38. John Paul II's use of the word "hence" here is interesting. On the one hand, the pontiff can not deny the social pervasion of sin in the complex systems of economic injustice, but on the other hand the "causes" of such sin are "complex and not always identifiable." Without a person to blame, a moral agent to discern as wholly and directly accountable, the pope is then constrained to conclude that it is only in terms of an "analogical meaning" that social sin can actually be

Near the end of §16, John Paul II identifies the "watering down" of a sense of personal sin as a particular concern of his. The Roman pontiff exclaims that he is highly worried lest "some vague entity or anonymous collectivity such as the situation, the system, society, structures or institutions" be allowed the blame for sin which properly redounds to individuals.[155] The bottom line for the pope is that whenever the church talks about social sin and sinful situations, the point being made in fact is "that such cases of social sin are the result of the accumulation and concentration of many personal sins. It is a case of the very personal sins of those who cause or support evil or who exploit it . . . The real responsibility, then, lies with individuals."[156] Moral agency belongs exclusively to people and not to situations or structures. And since, "at the heart of every situation of sin are always to be found sinful people," the remedy for social sin is the individual conversion of "the people directly or indirectly responsible for that situation."[157]

---

considered sinful: it is *like* sin, but not—one might say, "ontologically speaking"—a *peccatum verum*. According to John Paul II, in other words, only individuals can commit personal sin and therefore social sin is sin only analogically. In the next few sentences the pope then appears concerned that people may perhaps exculpate themselves too greatly from their responsibility in social sin; and so he refines the "analogical" reference and goes out of his way to stress that even though social sin may not be true sin, individuals are still liable for their individual contributions to "those disastrous conditions and intolerable situations."

[155]Ibid., §16, 38, 39. Similar sentiments are later expanded in §18 of Part Two titled, The Loss of the Sense of Sin.

[156]Ibid., §16, 39.

[157]Ibid. Along the way of describing social sin, the pope reaffirms the teaching promulgated by the Council of Trent of a threefold requirement for an action to be a mortal sin (grave matter, full knowledge, and deliberate consent). John Paul II avers: "There exist acts which, *per se* and in themselves, independently of circumstances, are always seriously

Part Three of the Apostolic Exhortation is entitled, "The Pastoral Ministry of

Penance and Reconciliation," and constitutes a brief catechism on the meaning and function

of the sacrament of penance. Pope John Paul II still holds to the social nature of personal

sin, but the focus—the burden, if you will—of reconciliation given here clearly falls mostly

to the penitent. To begin with, conversion from sin is cast by John Paul II not so much as

the fruit of reconciliation but as its very precondition. Employing as example the parable of

the Prodigal Son (Lk 15:11-32), the pope argues that it is the repentant son's "coming to

his senses" and his decision to return to his father's house acknowledging his sinfulness that

set the conditions for the reconciliation which is later achieved through his father's

proffered forgiveness; the pontiff concludes: "There can be no reconciliation unless these

attitudes of conversion come first."[158]

The sacramental process begins when the penitent, converted and repentant, goes

singly to that person entrusted with the power to forgive sins, the priest.[159] It is then and

there that "the rectitude and clarity of the penitent's conscience"—themselves the fruit of a

sincere and prerequisite examination of conscience—find expression in an earnest

confession of sin; this occurs when people "realize that sin is contrary to the ethical norm

---

wrong by reason of their object. These acts, if carried out with sufficient awareness and freedom, are always gravely sinful"; ibid., §17, 43.

[158]Ibid., §26, 64.

[159]John Paul II presents the role of the minister in the sacrament of reconciliation in two aspects: first, the priest as judge of the seriousness of the sins presented and of the sincerity of the sinner's repentance, and second, as healer of the human weaknesses leading to sin ; ibid., §31 passim.

written in their inmost being."[160] With confession must follow, once again as an initiative on

the part of the penitent, contrition: "A clear and decisive rejection of the sin committed,

together with a resolution not to commit it again."[161] It is the experience of contrition, the

"lost joy, the joy of being saved" which comes from "drawing near to the holiness of God,"

that constitutes the principal rationale given by the pope for why the confession of sins in all

but the most extraordinary of cases must be done individually.[162] That affective experience

of contriteness reconnects the person to the community, represented by the priest, which

has been offended by the sin: "This confession in a way forces sin out of the secret of the

heart and thus out of the area of pure individuality, emphasizing its social character as well,

for through the minister of penance it is the ecclesial community, which has been wounded

by sin, that welcomes anew the repentant and forgiven sinner."[163]

The divine pardon which follows—the culminating act in the sacrament of penance

itself ("at this moment the contrite and converted sinner comes into contact with the power

and mercy of God"[164])—is also presented in individualistic terms: "Forgiveness is offered to

---

[160]Ibid., §31, 79.

[161]Ibid. The pope immediately then goes on to call contrition "the beginning and the heart of conversion . . . [that] which brings the person back to God."

[162]Ibid., §31, 80. In the subsequent section of Part Three of the Apostolic Exhortation, entitled Forms of Celebration, John Paul II specifies that the "third form" of the Rite of Penance (*Ordo Paenitentiae*)—general confession and absolution—"is exceptional in character . . . [and] is regulated by a special discipline"; ibid., §32, 85.

[163]Ibid., §31, 80, 81.

[164]Ibid., §31, 81.

each individual by means of sacramental absolution given by the ministers of penance."[165]

The reception by the penitent of the divine grace which comes with this pardoning

completes the sinner's reconciliation with God. The acts of penance (the pope prefers to

use the term "acts of satisfaction") which, lastly, are laid upon the penitent who has been

forgiven and absolved by the priest are meant "to express more clearly all that they signify,"

namely, the commitment to begin a new life, demonstrated by performing "acts of worship,

charity, mercy or reparation."[166] Even with all that, the individual's conversion is not

assured, and only ongoing "spiritual mortification" will ensure that the penitent continues in

the process of being healed from the "infectious source of sin" which "remains in the

Christian a dark area due to the wound of sin."[167] While the pope still acknowledges that

sin offends and wounds the whole church, hence affirming "this ecclesial nature of the

sacrament," the penitential process itself is described by him in atomistic solitariness:

"Everything takes place between the individual alone and God."[168]

In the end, the Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et paenitentia* reaffirms the

basic Tridentine parameters of the sacrament of penance. While John Paul II's first

definition of social sin, any personal sin which harms "the entire ecclesial body and the

---

[165]Ibid., §30, 76. John Paul II, employing scholastic language, calls the granting of absolution "the effective sign of the intervention of the Father" (ibid., §31, 81) and refers twice to its ability to "blot out sin" (ibid., §31, 81, 82) and to render the individual "born new and uncontaminated" (ibid., §31, 83) .

[166]Ibid., §31, 82.

[167]Ibid.

[168] Ibid., §31, 83.

whole human family" such that "every sin can undoubtedly be considered as social sin" (see

§16 discussed above), may be adequately compassed by his interpretation of the sacrament

of penance, it is harder to see how his second and third definitions of social sin also given in

§16—that catalogue of "offenses against one's neighbor" [e.g., sins "against the common

good"], as well as those sinful "situations . . . [which] become generalized and reach vast

proportions as social phenomena"—are equally satisfied by individual contrition *or*

individual acts of penance given that the intertwined nature of both the causes and effects of

these social sins is "not always identifiable." Additionally, because "everything takes place

between the individual alone and God" (§31), there is no call pressed by John Paul II for

communal conversion [5] since it is the community—i.e., the church—which is offended by

the individual, not the other way around. Social sin is always reducible to personal sin.[169]

---

[169]The modern move to split sin into three categories, as is sometimes argued by proponents of fundamental option—venial, grave, and mortal—instead of the traditional two categories of venial and mortal, also receives the pontiff's disapprobation. The concern with this added level of distinction appears to be a worry that "grave" sins might be construed as falling in some sort of gradated *scale* of seriousness, as if in mortal sin there could be some sort of middle ground between an action which "destroys charity and sin which does not kill the supernatural life"; the fact of the matter, according to John Paul II, is that "there is no middle way between life and death." The pope discusses this point in the context of his critique of fundamental option which is characterized by him as a newly constructed "theological category," one which runs the danger of limiting mortal sin only to those occasions of consciously "intending . . . an explicit and formal contempt for God and neighbor." John Paul II, in contradistinction, upholds the objective nature of an action and affirms the church's teaching that "mortal sin exists also when a person knowingly and willingly, for whatever reason, chooses something gravely disordered"; see ibid., §17, 44. The pope does employ the language of "serious sin" several times in the document, but only in order to reaffirm the "ancient penitential practice . . . [of] individual and integral confession of sins with individual absolution [which] constitutes the only ordinary way in which the faithful . . . are reconciled with God and with the church"; ibid., §33, 88.

Even if general sacramental absolution, because of its less individualistic dimension, were ever to prove more suitable in fostering communal conversion, it would not receive endorsement from Pope John Paul II who goes on to specify and clarify that the "third form" of the Rite of Penance must never be taken as a substitute for the necessity of individual confession, nor is its use to be a matter of mere pastoral preference, but allowable only in those cases sanctioned by the local bishop in conformance to the *Ordo*. This final point in the Apostolic Exhortation removes any lingering concern that the pontiff may see social sin—even "analogically"—as anything other than the province of individuals who bear the moral responsibility of singularly confessing their sins.

Sollicitudo rei socialis ("On Social Concern"), 1987 Encyclical

The encyclical, *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, "On Social Concern," was promulgated by Pope John Paul II on 30 December 1987 to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of Pope Paul VI's social encyclical, *Populorum progressio*. In addition to paying tribute to his predecessor's letter, John Paul II sets out as his goal a "fuller and more nuanced" updating of the main social concern of the church, a concern which he defines as the "authentic development of man [*sic*] and society."[170] Acknowledging the reality of poverty and underdevelopment that exists throughout much of the world, the pope reemphasizes the need for "an application of the word of God to people's lives and the life of society," noting that analysis of the problem of development cannot merely be an intellectual exercise, but

---

[170]Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, §4, 397; §1, 395.

must end up "directed toward *moral conduct*."[171] The belief that moral evaluation leads

necessarily to moral action in the social sphere (*Populorum progressio* §48's assertion of a

"duty of solidarity"), is cast by John Paul II, however, in strikingly individualistic terms and

with broad allowance for a generalized interpretation of personal ethical obligations:

> Therefore political leaders, and citizens of rich countries considered as individuals, especially if they are Christians, have the *moral obligation*, according to the degree of each one's responsibility, to *take into consideration*, in personal decisions and decisions of government, this relationship of universality, this interdependence which exists between their conduct and the poverty and underdevelopment of so many millions of people.[172]

In the next section of the encyclical the pope surveys the contemporary world and

admits with regret that in the two decades since the issuing of *Populorum progressio* "the

hopes for development, at that time so lively, today appear very far from being realized."[173]

John Paul II finds the economic separation of peoples into the categories of First World,

Third World, etc., itself to be problematic: making such distinctions—which he avers

"conceals a *moral content*"[174]—undermines the very nature of the church which, in the

words of *Lumen gentium* §1 that pope repeats, is to be a "sacrament or sign and instrument

. . . of the unity of the whole human race." Moving towards determining responsibility for

---

[171]Ibid., §8, 398. John Paul II reiterates the ethical dimensions of the problem in the next section when he goes on to point out that the encyclical *Populorum progressio* of Pope Paul VI established the ethical question of unequal distribution of the means of subsistence as "a *moral fact*," a social reality that can not simply be ignored.

[172]Ibid., §9, 399.

[173]Ibid., §12, 401.

[174]Ibid., §14, 402. The "*moral content*" which the pope warns about derives (presumably) from a concern that to consider any human being different from another is at some level unethical.

the lack of human solidarity to be found in the world, the pope looks widely for answers in

individual and communal inaction as well as societal structures controlled by the rich:

> Responsibility for this deterioration is due to various causes. Notable among them are undoubtedly grave instances of omissions on the part of the developing nations themselves, and especially on the part of those holding economic and political power. . . .

> Moreover, one must denounce the existence of economic, financial and social *mechanisms* which, although they are manipulated by people, often function almost automatically, thus accentuating the situation of wealth for some and poverty for the rest. These mechanisms, which are maneuvered directly or indirectly by the more developed countries, by their very functioning favor the interests of the people manipulating them.[175]

Reprising his declaration in *Reconciliatio et paenitentia* (§16) that "also social is

every sin against the common good," John Paul II condemns the tensions between East and

West which mark the Cold War and encourage arms production at the expense of helping

the poor. Such abandonment of the "common good" is characterized by the pontiff as "a

real desertion of a moral obligation."[176] The common good in this case is taken to be more

than just the spread of economic development to ever-widening circles of people; it

represents movement toward what is, in fact, the very goal of creation. Pope John Paul II

identifies the true vocation and destiny of all persons as related to the "*transcendent reality*

---

[175]Ibid., §16, 404. John Paul II seems to imply a kind of existential independence to sinful structures (his description of them as "*mechanisms* which . . . function almost automatically"), while at the same time viewing them as agencyless constructs merely "maneuvered" and manipulated by (unaccounted) individuals who in some manner or other still bear the moral responsibility for their evil consequences.

[176]Ibid., §23, 409. A bit further (§26, 411), the pope calls again for collective action to rectify these problems, casting his moral plea for action in common on renewed personal virtue in the individual: "The good to which we are all called and the happiness to which we aspire cannot be obtained without an *effort and commitment on the part of all*, nobody excluded, and the consequent renouncing of personal selfishness."

of the human being," a theological anthropology with distinctly moral overtones:

"Development cannot consist only in the use, dominion over and *indiscriminate* possession

of created things and the products of human industry, but rather in *subordinating* the

possession, dominion and use to man's divine likeness and to his vocation to

immortality."[177]

With that teleological underpinning in place, Pope John II is now ready to confront

the problem of poverty head-on. The injustice of unequal distribution, of the few having so

much more vis-à-vis the many poor who have so little "of the goods and services originally

intended for all," creates a disorder in both groups which is explained by the pontiff in

existential terms:

> This then is the picture: there are some people—the few who possess much—who do not really succeed in "being" because, through a reversal of the hierarchy of values, they are hindered by the cult of "having"; and there are others—the many who have little or nothing—who do not succeed in realizing their basic human vocation because they are deprived of essential goods.

> The evil does not consist in "having" as such, but in possessing without regard for the *quality* and the *ordered hierarchy* of the goods one has. *Quality and hierarchy* arise from the subordination of goods and their availability to man's "being" and his true vocation.[178]

---

[177]Ibid., §29, 414. Later, the pope amplifies this line of argument with language reminiscent of the moral theology of Thomas Aquinas: namely, that according to God's plan and from the beginning, "The goods of creation *are meant for all*"; ibid., §39, 422. Interestingly, Pope Leo XIII, in §19 of his ground-breaking encyclical of 1891, *Rerum novarum*, directly quoted the Aquinian exposition of this point from the *Summa Theologiae* (IIa, IIae, q. 66, art. 2): "Man should not consider his outward possessions as is own, but as common to all, so as to share them without difficulty when others are in need."

[178]Ibid., §28, 413.

The redistribution of wealth is explicitly identified by the pope as the remedy for the injustice of poverty [4] and becomes, hence, a moral imperative. His first look though, is not to others, but within, to the institutional church itself:

> Thus, part of the teaching and most ancient practice of the Church is her conviction that she is obliged by her vocation—she herself, her ministers and each of her members—to relieve the misery of the suffering, both far and near, not only out of her "abundance" but also out of her "necessities." Faced by cases of need, one cannot ignore them in favor of superfluous church ornaments and costly furnishings for divine worship; on the contrary it could be obligatory to sell these goods in order to provide food, drink, clothing and shelter for those who lack these things . . . here we are shown a "*hierarchy of values.*"[179]

A communal sense of duty to work to alleviate poverty is explicit in the pope's call for solidarity ("a duty of *all towards all*").[180] In his teaching here, John Paul II broaches the notion of plural subjects operating in concert with a shared, i.e., single, intentionality:

> The obligation to commit oneself to the development of peoples is not just an *individual* duty, and still less an *individualistic* one, as if it were possible to achieve this development through the isolated efforts of each individual. It is an imperative which obliges *each and every* man and woman, as well as societies and nations. In particular, it obliges the Catholic Church and the other churches and ecclesial communities, with which we are completely willing to collaborate in this field.[181]

---

[179]Ibid., §31, 416. While the sentiment expressed here mirrors the surprise ending of Morris West's popular 1963 novel, *The Shoes of the Fisherman* (wherein the pope sells all the riches of the Vatican and gives the money to the poor), John Paul II never did actually align his own "*hierarchy of values*" to include such a grand selling-off of Vatican wealth.

[180]Ibid., §32, 416. The turn of phrase using *all* doubly is also found in §38, 421; see the quote footnoted no. 189 below.

[181]Ibid.

Having established "the essentially moral character of development,"[182] Pope John

Paul II goes on to specify the parameters of ethical responsibility in this regard. Although

the scope of his political and economic analysis is broad and his concerns are clearly social

in nature, the pope proceeds to assess moral liability in distinctly individualized terms.

Ultimately unacceptant of any notion of plural subjects as participating in or sharing moral

accountability, however, the pontiff can only conclude: "It is therefore necessary to single

out the *moral causes* which, with respect to the behavior of *individuals* considered as

responsible persons, interfere in such a way as to slow down the course of development and

hinder its full achievement."[183] Social paradigms are understood by John Paul II only as

aggregations of single actions for which moral responsibility can be fixed at the individual,

i.e., unconnected, level. As a consequence of his stance, whether the state or other

corporate entities can operate collectively in a moral (or immoral) manner, or how it may be

that individuals bear influence on polities or large-scale social structures and so share in the

moral responsibility for them [3], are perspectives on the social dimensions of sin simply not

addressed by the pope.

The reality of global economic injustice "in which instead of interdependence and

solidarity different forms of imperialism hold sway," forces John Paul II to conclude that

this "can only be a world subject to structures of sin."[184] Even though with this comment

---

[182]Ibid., §35, 419. A few paragraphs later the pontiff reiterates: "The main obstacles to development will be overcome only by means of *essentially moral decisions*"; ibid.

[183]Ibid.

[184]Ibid., §36, 419. The adoption and use of the term "structures of sin" comes across as a remarkable development in the thought of John Paul II. Only three years earlier,

the pope openly acknowledges the existence of structural sin, John Paul II is careful in his next paragraph to explain more precisely what he means by the term, especially as regards its provenance. Reprising tenets from §16 of his 1984 Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et paenitentia* ("cases of social sin are the result of the accumulation and concentration of many personal sins . . . the real responsibility, then, lies with individuals"), the pope writes here in *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, in an oft-quoted passage:

> If the present situation can be attributed to difficulties of various kinds, it is not out of place to speak of "structures of sin," which, as I stated in my Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*, are rooted in personal sin, and thus always linked to the *concrete acts* of individuals who introduce these structures, consolidate them and make them difficult to remove. And thus they grow stronger, spread, and become the source of other sins, and so influence people's behavior.[185]

While it seems John Paul II is mostly interested in upholding personal responsibility for individual sin as the source of structural sin, his comments, particularly in the latter part of this passage, nevertheless open up an important line of argument concerning the extent to which inherited social circumstances do in fact affect our moral agency [1].

Humankind's response to this situation of sin—and the word must be used in order to "give a name to the root of the evils which afflict us"—is moral in nature, and not simply political, because God "requires from people clear-cut attitudes which express themselves also in actions or omissions toward one's neighbor. . . . Not to observe these [the latter five

---

in *Reconciliatio et paenitentia* §16, he had written that a "situation—or likewise an institution, a structure, society itself—is not in itself the subject of moral acts. Hence a situation [or structure] cannot in itself be good or bad." It is hard to square the earlier, morally neutral assertion about structures being neither good nor bad with the pope's contention now that the world is actually "subject to structures of sin," except to see it as a significant evolution in his thinking.

[185]Ibid.

of the Ten Commandments] is to offend God and hurt one's neighbor, and to introduce into the world influences and obstacles which go far beyond the actions and brief life span of an individual."[186] The love of money and the thirst for power—desires which drive both individuals and the larger societies to which they belong—are the twin poles of idolatrous concupiscence identified by the pope as the chief causes of the world's misery.[187] The real cause of the lack of integral economic development in the world today, John Paul II concludes, "The true *nature* of the evil which faces us . . . [is one constituting] a question of a *moral evil*, the fruit of *many sins* which lead to 'structures of sin.'"[188]

The path to rectifying this evil remains conversion [5]. The pope calls for growth in the awareness of our interdependence which must then, he believes, lead to a fuller embrace of human solidarity and a commitment to the common good, "That is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are *all* really responsible *for all*."[189] John Paul II

---

[186]Ibid., §36, 420. Once again the pope is acknowledging the perduring influence of sin on the world. This comment and the one following from §37 both reflect John Paul II's perception of how individual actions can contribute to social sin [1].

[187]Here John Paul II is reiterating the explanation for the root cause of structural sin found in the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's document from the year before, *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation* (*Libertatis conscientia*), §42: "Having become his own center, sinful man [*sic*] tends to assert himself and to satisfy his desire for the infinite by the use of things: wealth, power and pleasure, despising other people and robbing them unjustly and treating them as objects or instruments. Thus he makes his own contribution to the creation of those very structures of exploitation and slavery which he claims to condemn."

[188]Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, §37, 420.

[189]Ibid., §38, 421.

envisions this human solidarity as playing out amongst all peoples, whatever their own

economic level, in a spirit of true charity:

> Those who are more influential, because they have a greater share of goods and
> common services, should feel *responsible* for the weaker and be ready to share with
> them all they possess. Those who are weaker, for their part, in the same spirit of
> *solidarity*, should not adopt a purely *passive* attitude or one that is *destructive* of the
> social fabric, but, while claiming their legitimate rights, should do what they can for the
> good of all. The intermediate groups, in their turn, should not selfishly insist on their
> particular interests, but respect the interests of others.[190]

In promoting specific guidelines for the Christian response to the problems of

authentic development, John Paul II calls first for a wider diffusion of the church's social

doctrine which he believes is crucial for conversion to happen. The pope sees Catholic

social teaching as more than simply another kind of ideology: it is, rather, a key to the

solution of economic injustice and an integral part of the ecclesial responsibility to proclaim

and promote the revelation of God to the world. In this regard, the pope makes particular

reference to the so-called "option for the poor," a notion which he is careful, however, to

call "the *option* or *love of preference* for the poor," observing that it affects our lives as

individuals seeking to imitate Christ and "applies equally to our *social responsibilities* and

hence to our manner of living, and to the logical decisions to be made concerning the

ownership and use of goods."[191] The pontiff goes on to note that the exercise of Christian

---

[190]Ibid., §39, 422. A bit further on, the pope repeats the essential point that "solidarity demands a readiness to accept the sacrifices necessary for the good of the whole community"; ibid., §45, 428.

[191]Ibid., §42, 425. John Paul II defines this option as "a *special form* of primacy in the exercise of Christian charity"; ibid. The changeover in phraseology from the call at Puebla in 1979 for a "preferential option for the poor" to a "love of preference for the poor" was first established in 1986 by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith [*Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation* (*Libertatis conscientia*) §68]: "Hence

charity clearly must lead to action: "The motivating concern for the poor . . . must be translated at all levels into concrete actions, until it decisively attains a series of necessary reforms," but John Paul II avoids any further specification of what should be done in this regard since "each local situation will show what reforms are most urgent and how they can be achieved."[192]

Writings from the 1990s

Centesimus annus ("The Centenary"), 1991 Encyclical

Some three and one-half years after publication of *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, Pope John Paul II felt impelled to continue his elaboration of social teaching: firstly, to keep with the tradition of issuing papal documents honoring the anniversary of Pope Leo XIII's 1891

---

also those who are oppressed by poverty are the object of a love of preference on the part of the Church . . ." The reason for making this distinction would appear to come in the next paragraph of §68 when the curial document proclaims: "This option excludes no one. This is the reason why the Church cannot express this option by means of reductive sociological and ideological categories which would make this preference a partisan choice and a source of conflict."

Interestingly, although the CDF's wording, a "love of preference for the poor," is used three times by the pope in this 1987 encyclical, when *Sollicitudo rei socialis* is actually cited by John Paul II in §11 of his 1991 encyclical *Centesimus annus* (the notion is mentioned again in §57) the terminology used is, "preferential option for the poor"—presented without any elaboration apparently being needed for the switch back to the Puebla wording.

[192]Ibid., §43, 426.

Rerum novarum[193] by producing his own centennial reflection on that seminal encyclical, and secondly, to respond to the momentous events of 1989 which marked the end of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics as a political entity, if not also the downfall of Marxism as an economic system and perhaps even of communist Russia as a dominating influence in the world. John Paul II promulgated *Centesimus annus*: *On the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum novarum* on 1 May 1991, the thirteenth year of his papacy: and it is clear from the text that, by this time, the Roman pontiff had not only fully incorporated Vatican II's dictum about reading "the signs of the times," but was at ease engaging in detailed political and economic analysis of current events.

While often referring to *Rerum novarum* and the issues of the dignity of labor and the right to private property (tempered by an understanding of the universal destination of the earth's goods), which were landmark subjects of discussion in that earlier encyclical, John Paul II's main interests here seem much more narrow. Even though mention is made of both the history and problems of the Third World, the pope's eye is clearly more on Europe, as evidenced by his careful dissection of and focus on the "fall of communism," considered the major political event of the years right before *Centesimus annus*. A significant portion of the text is titled, and fully eight sections of the magisterial document are devoted to, The Year 1989, during which "the fundamental crisis of systems" ended in the collapse of the Soviet Union—an outcome which, according to the pope from Kraków,

---

[193]Pope Pius XI promulgated *Quadragesimo anno* ("After Forty Years") in 1931, and Pope Paul VI issued *Octogesima adveniens* ("A Call to Action on the Eightieth Anniversary of *Rerum novarum*") in 1971. Pope John Paul II, himself, published *Laborem Exercens* ("On Human Work") in 1981, in part to commemorate the ninetieth anniversary of *Rerum novarum*.

"began with the great upheavals which took place in Poland in the name of solidarity."[194]

With so much focus on Eurocentric issues such as industrialized workers' rights, labor

relations, trade unions, the free market and the like, John Paul II's encyclical tends to give

short shrift to the problems of economic injustice and intractable poverty that so animated

the CELAM meetings and the writings of liberation theology in the several decades just

prior. The fervent cry for justice that had emanated from Latin America seems all but

unnoticed in the pope's dry analysis of market systems.

That being said, the theological anthropology underpinning *Centesimus annus* does

disclose some of the fundamental contours of how Pope John Paul II views human freedom,

and with that, it provides an indication of how he understands conscience and moral

agency—all subjects pertinent to the five questions being asked of magisterial texts in this

thesis. The Roman pontiff takes as his premise the dignity of the human person as a

creation of God and extrapolates from that notion an essential corollary belief that God's

purpose is for the good of the individual who, secondarily and in turn, is then meant to join

with others in support of "the common good."[195] Referencing Pope Leo XIII's writings,

John Paul II explains how humankind, by misuse of God's gift of freedom, falls into

patterns of behavior which undercut this common good described thus:

> The socioeconomic consequences of an error . . . [which] consists in an understanding
> of human freedom which detaches it from obedience to the truth, and consequently
> from the duty to respect the rights of others. The essence of freedom then becomes
> self-love carried to the point of contempt for God and neighbour, a self-love which

---

[194]Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus annus*, §23, 455.

[195]That this concept represents the bedrock of John Paul II's moral philosophy is
attested by the fact that he uses the term *the common good* fifteen times in the encyclical.

leads to an unbridled affirmation of self-interest and which refuses to be limited by any demand of justice.[196]

The remedy for overweening self-love is found in the *proper* exercise of human freedom, namely, one that is in conformity with the truth and the will of God.[197] The pope further explicates the parameters of human freedom:

> Nevertheless, it cannot be forgotten that the manner in which the individual exercises his freedom is conditioned in innumerable ways. While these certainly have an influence on freedom, they do not determine it; they make the exercise of freedom more difficult or less difficult, but they cannot destroy it.[198]

Here John Paul II gives credence to a "situated" human free will [1], perhaps one precarious in nature—influenced as it is by culture and history—but ultimately still considered to be under the control of the individual. The pope knows that "man [humankind] who was created for freedom, bears within himself the wound of original sin, which constantly draws him toward evil and puts him in need of redemption."[199] So how, exactly, shall human freedom be conditioned to achieve good?

Pope John Paul II sees the problem as one of misordered priorities. The reason why economic injustice persists at all, he argues, is not that we lack the means of overcoming

---

[196]Ibid., §17, 451.

[197]"But freedom attains its full development only by accepting the truth"; ibid., §46, 474. The pope then goes on to call this exercise of liberty "religious freedom, understood as the right to live in the truth of one's faith and in conformity with one's transcendent dignity as a person"; ibid., §46, 474-75.

[198]Ibid., §25, 457. That human action is "conditioned" from without—but also that these external influences do not "determine" human freedom, governance of which is held to be still absolutely at the disposal of the individual—is an iteration of a point made earlier in *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, §16, 36 (see passage footnoted no. 149 in this chapter).

[199]Ibid.

poverty, but rather that we lack the will to change our habits and our actions which sustain its continuance. This disordering of the will over our habits involves the same skewed "hierarchy of values" that was prominently reproved by him in the earlier encyclical, *Sollicitudo rei socialis*. This time the pontiff writes:

> What is called for is a special effort to mobilize resources, which are not lacking in the world as a whole, for the purpose of economic growth and common development, redefining the priorities and hierarchies of values on the basis of which economic and political choices are made.[200]

"Consumerism" is the name give by Pope John Paul II to the ideology which stands as the principal cause of the problem of economic inequity. External social forces, combined with humankind's inbuilt proclivity towards concupiscence, produce the misorientation of values which allows social sin to exist [2]:

> A person who is concerned solely or primarily with possessing and enjoying, who is no longer able to control his instincts and passions, or to subordinate them by obedience to the truth, cannot be free: obedience to the truth about God and man [*sic*] is the first condition of freedom, making it possible for a person to order his needs and desires and to choose the means of satisfying them according to a correct scale of values, so that the ownership of things may become an occasion of growth for him. This growth can be hindered as a result of manipulation by the means of mass communication, which impose fashions and trends of opinion through carefully orchestrated repetition,

---

[200]Ibid., §28, 460. This same point about the necessity of reordering priorities is repeated several times by John Paul II, sometimes using different language, but still overall, presented rather consistent in meaning: "[What is needed is] a coherent vision of the common good. The latter is not simply the sum total of particular interests; rather it involves an assessment and integration of those interests on the basis of a balanced hierarchy of values; ultimately, it demands a correct understanding of the dignity and the rights of the person" (ibid., §47, 475); "[consumerism fosters] an appeal to the appetites and inclinations towards immediate gratification, making it difficult to recognize and respect the hierarchy of the true values of human existence" (ibid., §29, 460); and again, "helping entire peoples which are presently excluded or marginalized to enter into the sphere of economic and human development [can best be accomplished by] . . . orienting them [existing social organizations] according to an adequate notion of the common good in relation to the whole human family" (ibid., §58, 482).

without it being possible to subject to critical scrutiny the premises on which these fashions and trends are based.[201]

The role of the church, as expressed through its social doctrine, is to lead people in the right direction: "For such a task [confronting complex social, economic, and political problems] the church offers her social teaching as an indispensable and ideal orientation, a teaching which, as already mentioned, recognizes the positive value of the market and of enterprise, but which at the same time points out that these need to be oriented towards the common good."[202] To the pontiff's mind, once people fully recognize that "the Son of God has saved mankind and at the same time has united all people, making them responsible for one another,"[203] they will act charitably in accord with that realization. A kind of restraint achievable through law-making is also vaunted as the means to curb the excesses of capitalism: "The market [must] be appropriately controlled by the forces of society and by

---

[201]Ibid., §41, 470. Here the pope is considering the influence of the ambient culture in skewing a person's prioritization of values in a way that is reminiscent of Baum's "false consciousness." In these circumstances the pontiff holds the individual practically powerless to resist the "manipulation by the means of mass communication . . . it [hardly] being possible to subject to critical scrutiny the premises on which these fashions and trends are based." The same dynamic of selfishness and misplaced values, this time at play in the matter of ecological devastation, is another point made by John Paul II: "In his desire to have and to enjoy rather than to be and to grow, man [sic] consumes the resources of the earth and his own life in an excessive and disordered way"; ibid., §37, 467.

[202]Ibid., §43, 471. New ways of thinking, or rather new understandings achieved by more appropriately prioritized ways of thinking, are consistently presented by the pope as the key means of overcoming the problem: "One must be guided by a comprehensive picture of man [sic] which respects all the dimensions of his being and which subordinates his material and instinctive dimensions to his interior and spiritual ones" (ibid., §36, 466); and again, "a great deal of educational and cultural work is urgently needed, including the education of consumers in the responsible use of their power of choice"; ibid.

[203]Ibid., §51, 478.

the state, so as to guarantee that the basic needs of the whole of society are satisfied."[204]

This construction of a new "hierarchy of values" based upon "the common good" is

presented by John Paul II as mostly a matter of restraining the appetites; in so doing, "He

[man, i.e., humankind] displays his capacity for self-control, personal sacrifice, solidarity

and readiness to promote the common good."[205] The task can be accomplished, however,

only through a concerted effort: "Just as there is a collective responsibility for avoiding war,

so too there is a collective responsibility for promoting development."[206] Although the pope

does not elaborate on the parameters of common action needed in order to ensure the

promotion of the "common good," John Paul II opens his thinking here to allow some role

for the notion of "plural subjects" as operative in moral agency [3].

The move toward promoting integral development entails not only new thinking, but

also a new sense of giving on the part of those who have much; it is "an effort which also

involves sacrificing the positions of income and of power enjoyed by the more developed

economies. This may mean making important changes in established life-styles."[207] The

history of the church in this regard is abundantly clear to the pope: it has always offered

"concrete commitment and material assistance in the struggle against marginalization and

suffering";[208] and again, "The church has always been present and active among the needy,

---

[204]Ibid., §35, 465.

[205]Ibid., §51, 477.

[206]Ibid., §52, 478.

[207]Ibid., §52, 479.

[208]Ibid., §26, 458.

offering them material assistance in ways that neither humiliate nor reduce them to mere

objects of assistance, but which help them to escape their precarious situation by promoting

their dignity as persons."[209] What is required now is a more vibrant response from others;

and it is in this context that the pope returns to the notion of a preferential option for the

poor:

> Today more than ever, the church is aware that her social message will gain credibility more immediately from the witness of actions than as a result of its internal logic and consistency. This awareness is also a source of her preferential option for the poor, which is never exclusive or discriminatory towards other groups. . . .
>
> . . . it is not enough to draw on the surplus goods which in fact our world abundantly produces; it requires above all a change of life-styles, of models of production and consumption, and of the established structures of power which today govern societies.[210]

This wholesale change in attitudes and behavior called for by Pope John Paul II

impels him, as a magisterial teacher, to stand up bravely for the disadvantaged: "Aware of

the fact that too many people live, not in the prosperity of the Western world, but in the

poverty of the developing countries amid conditions which are still 'a yoke little better than

that of slavery itself' [*Rerum novarum*, §3] she [the church] has felt and continues to feel

obliged to denounce this fact with absolute clarity and frankness, although she knows that

her call will not always win favor with everyone."[211] In the end, the pontiff considers that

this denunciation is adequate to move hearts and influence actions in a meaningful way.

---

[209]Ibid., §49, 476.

[210]Ibid., §57, 481; §58, 482.

[211]Ibid., §61, 483-84.

Tertio millennio adveniente ("The Coming Third Millennium"), 1994 Apostolic Letter

The upcoming jubilee year of 2000, which also celebrates the 2000th birthday of Jesus, was so momentous an occasion for the Catholic church that Pope John Paul II was moved to reflect on its historic significance in an Apostolic Letter issued on 10 November 1994, *Tertio millennio adveniente*, "The Coming Third Millennium." The pope's letter is both a look back over two millennia of Christendom and a look forward to the celebration of that history with an eye toward what kind of recommitment on the part of the church would be appropriate for such a milestone event. The Apostolic Letter reads like a kind of "summa theologica," touching briefly on almost every topic and issue in theology as it ranges over the full meaning implicit in the fact that Christ "truly became on of us" (*Gaudium et spes*, §22). It is when John Paul II looks at the sacrament of penance and reconciliation in the context of preparation for the jubilee celebration that his thinking wades into consideration of how the church as a whole community—along with its constituent members individually—is in need of repentance: "The joy of every Jubilee is above all a joy based upon the forgiveness of sins, the joy of conversion. . . . conversion ("metanoia"), which is the pre-condition for reconciliation with God on the part of both individuals and communities."[212]

Holding to the Second Vatican Council's affirmation that the church is "at once holy and always in need of purification" (*Lumen gentium* §8, 358), the pope repeatedly

---

[212]*Tertio millennio adveniente* (*The Coming Third Millennium*), §32.

distinguishes between "the Church" and the sinful "children" who populate it. While not

identifying which historical events he is referring to, Pope John Paul II does admit that:

> the Church should become more fully conscious of the sinfulness of her children, recalling all those times in history when they departed from the spirit of Christ and his Gospel and, instead of offering to the world the witness of a life inspired by the values of faith, indulged in ways of thinking and acting which were truly forms of counter-witness and scandal.

> Although she is holy because of her incorporation into Christ, the Church does not tire of doing penance: before God and man [*sic*] she always acknowledges as her own her sinful sons and daughters.[213]

Both in the confession of its sins and the penance required to be done because of them, "the

Church," somehow separate from its members, or perhaps understood as the unity of all of

its members—how John Paul II understands this "plural subject" is not clear—is envisioned

as above the fray; he writes:

> the Church should make this passage [across the year 2000] with a clear awareness of what has happened to her during the last ten centuries. She cannot cross the threshold of the new millennium without encouraging her children to purify themselves, through repentance, of past errors and instances of infidelity, inconsistency, and slowness to act."[214]

No single person can make the necessary amends, but only all in the church who must will

to do so together.

Again not specifically identified, but acknowledged as "another painful chapter of

history to which the sons and daughters of the Church must return with a spirit of

---

[213]Ibid., §33. Almost identical language is used by John Paul II in his encyclical, *Ut unum sint*, promulgated some six months later: "The Catholic Church acknowledges and confesses the weaknesses of her members, conscious that their sins are so many betrayals of and obstacles to the accomplishment of the Savior's plan. . . . she does not cease to do penance"; Pope John Paul II, *Ut unum sint*, §3, 13.

[214]*Tertio millennio adveniente* (*The Coming Third Millennium*), §33.

repentance is that of the acquiescence given, especially in certain centuries, to intolerance

and even the use of violence in the service of truth."[215] While John Paul II offers some

excuse for the violence because of "the cultural conditioning of the times, as a result of

which many people may have held in good faith that an authentic witness to the truth could

include suppressing the opinions of others [1]," the pope nonetheless fully admits that "the

consideration of mitigating factors does not exonerate the Church from the obligation to

express profound regret for the weaknesses of so many of her sons and daughters who

sullied her face, preventing her from fully mirroring the image of her crucified Lord, the

supreme witness of patient love and of humble meekness."[216] The use of the capitalized

word, "Church," here suggests that the pontiff is speaking on behalf of and apologizing for

the People of God as a whole.[217] This "Church" arguably has a particular relationship to the

---

[215]Ibid., §35.

[216]Ibid. This public "communal" act of repentance is similar to several others that John Paul II undertook on behalf of an atoning church during his long papacy. See especially his apology to women, *Letter of Pope John Paul II to Women* (29 June 1995), when the pope—acknowledging the historical "conditioning [which] has been an obstacle to the progress of women"—apologizes for any "objective blame [ascribable to] not just a few members of the church," saying, "for this I am truly sorry (§3)." This communal sense of responsibility for the wrongs inflicted upon women then transfers over into a "penance" and conversion which have collective overtones as well; the pope continues: "May this regret be transformed, on the part of the whole church, into a renewed commitment of fidelity to the Gospel vision (§3)." See a discussion of this letter in Bradford E. Hinze, "Pope John Paul II on Collective Repentance," in *The Ecumenist: A Journal for Promoting Christian Unity* 3:3 (Jul-Sep 1996), 49-50.

[217]The understanding of "the church" as the People of God derives from language found in one of the key documents produced at the Second Vatican Council, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen gentium*). Chapter two of that text develops the notion of the People of God to include a common identity established by baptism and incorporation into the Body of Christ, one marked by a commitment to live out the Good News on a daily basis.

world and bears a corporate moral responsibility in a way that no one individual offender of

God's law does. John Paul II's thinking here lines up with his earlier magisterial teaching,

notably from §16 of his 1984 Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, that

personal sins coalesce into social sin which then exists beyond the lives of individual

perpetrators—who, nevertheless, do not escape responsibility for it: "[There needs to be] a

serious examination of conscience above all on the part of the Church of today. On the

threshold of the new Millennium Christians need to place themselves humbly before the

Lord and examine themselves on the responsibility which they too have for the evils of our

day."[218]

Ut unum sint ("That They May Be One"): *On Commitment to Ecumenism*, 1995 Encyclical

A similar unease with some of the collective history of the church is on display in *Ut

unum sint* which draws heavily on certain documents of the Second Vatican Council. In an

appeal to the "Churches and Ecclesial Communities not in full communion with the Catholic

Church,"[219] Pope John Paul II prays that "the Lord's disciples . . . [will] *re-examine

together their painful past* and the hurt which that past regrettably continues to provoke

even today."[220] Moving beyond the hurts of the past, the pope grounds his call for

communion in God's plan for unity effected by Christ's sacrificial death and hoped for by

---

[218]*Tertio millennio adveniente* (*The Coming Third Millennium*), §36.

[219]Pope John Paul II, *Ut unum sint*, §1, 11.

[220]Ibid., §2, 13.

the church on earth through his resurrection. Iterating the language of Vatican II, the

Roman pontiff notes that "the Decree on Ecumenism [*Unitatis redintegratio*, §3] does not

ignore the fact that [as regards ecclesial disunity] 'people of both sides were to blame,'"[221]

and he urges a way forward through a process of conversion quite similar to what the pope

had outlined in *Reconciliatio et paenitentia* (§4 passim) as necessary in overcoming any sin.

Referring again to the Decree on Ecumenism, John Paul II quotes the Vatican Fathers'

observation that "there can be no ecumenism worthy of the name without interior

conversion,"[222] and takes the point one step further, noting, "The Council calls for personal

conversion as well as for communal conversion [5]."[223] Averring that ecumenical "*dialogue

also serves as an examination of conscience*," the pope produces a communal

understanding of both sin and conversion:

> All the sins of the world were gathered up in the saving sacrifice of Christ, including
> the sins committed against the Church's unity: the sins of Christians, those of the
> pastors no less than those of the lay faithful. Even after the many sins which have
> contributed to our historical divisions, *Christian unity is possible*, provided that we are
> humbly conscious of having sinned against unity and are convinced of our need for
> conversion.[224]

And then, almost as an afterthought, the pope adds a most interesting and highly significant

further observation: "Not only personal sins must be forgiven and left behind, but also social

---

[221]Ibid., §11, 22.

[222]*Unitatis redintegratio* (Decree on Ecumenism), §7, 460.

[223]Pope John Paul II, *Ut unum sint*, §15, 26.

[224]Ibid., §34, 44.

sins, which is to say the sinful 'structures' themselves which have contributed and can still contribute to division and to the reinforcing of division."[225]

To be sure, the pope most likely has in mind the ecclesial "sinful structures" preserving the disunity of the church of Christ (he does not specifically name them) which are of a much different sort than the "sinful structures" described as the bane of the poor in the many texts of liberation theology. Still though, the concept of something outside of the self—patterns of behavior for which no one individual can shoulder all the blame and yet in which so many have participated that they perdure in a communal sense and carry with them the weight of sin—all of this, in conjunction with similar ideas mentioned in *Tertio millennio adveniente*, as outlined above, come across as quite novel in the thinking of John Paul II.[226] The pope's groundbreaking free admittance of "social sins" makes such an impression on Bradford E. Hinze that he writes approvingly in reaction to the pontiff's language: "Ecumenical sins are not simply a personal matter in need of personal acts of contrition. They are also social sins which require social acts of repentance and

---

[225]Ibid. These "structures"—meaning actions taken in common and reified over time into customs and practices—can also provide positive examples as well: "The structures of unity which existed before the separation [of the churches of the East and West] are a heritage of experience that guides our common path toward the re-establishment of full communion"; ibid., §56, 66.

[226]Margaret Pfeil is also impressed to observe that the pope discusses social sin in *Ut unum sint* without his "previously articulated reservations regarding the language of social sin, [so that] his usage of it here seems quite remarkable," Pfeil, "The Language of Social Sin," 170.

reconciliation and this entails examining our history and changing our collective patterns of communication and behavior."[227]

Pope John Paul II does not go on to detail the communal acts of contrition required of true repentance that Hinze implies he must in fact be calling for. Indeed, the pope draws away from such prescriptions toward the end of the encyclical when—while still calling for a "dialogue of conversion" as the foundation of ecumenical dialogue—the course of action he settles on regarding the penance required is all at the individualized level: "Each individual must recognize his own faults, confess his sins and place himself in the hands of the One who is our Intercessor before the Father, Jesus Christ."[228] Although "the sinful 'structures' themselves which have contributed" [§56, 66] to the "social sins" of disunity and division within the church (how is not exactly explained) may admit of repentance, they do not bear moral agency in the same way that people do. Since the pope has already made clear that the expression "social sin" has only "an analogical meaning" and "to speak even analogically of social sins must not cause us to underestimate the responsibility of the individuals involved" (*Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, §16, 38), it is not clear how the pontiff envisions communal conversion in the matter of Christian disunity, nor the exact nature of communal reconciliation here. In the end John Paul II recommends a solitary path: "Only the act of placing ourselves before God can offer a solid basis for that conversion of

---

[227]Bradford E. Hinze, "Pope John Paul II on Collective Repentance," 51.

[228]Pope John Paul II, *Ut unum sint*, §82, 91.

individual Christians and for that constant reform of the Church"; even other Christian communities are urged to draw "into this completely interior spiritual space."[229]

It is obvious that with *Ut unum sint* the pontiff's thinking has evolved quite a bit further than was evident in §16 of *Reconciliatio et paenitentia* when the pope affirmed: "A situation—or likewise an institution, a structure, society itself—is not in itself the subject of moral acts. Hence a situation cannot in itself be good or bad." It is but a logical step forward to ask that if ingrained ways of operating and mechanisms within the church can cause disunity in the Body of Christ so as to earn the label of social sin, could not other established patterns of relationship and human activities—say, the structures of economic injustice—also function sinfully in a similar way? And would not these other social sins also bear the weight of needing repentance and expiation, perhaps even through some mechanism of communal conversion?

Conclusion

The writings selected for investigation in this thesis have ranged over a variety of topics and presented magisterial teachings different in both style and substance. Along the way, bracketed numbers have marked areas of common themes in the texts (despite their mixed contents) related to the five heuristic questions. Now those disparate elements will be brought together and synthesized to find areas of common understanding—as well as divergence—in the theology and teaching presented. Analysis of each question *through* the

---

[229] Ibid., §82, 92.

documents, the integrative goal of chapter four, will provide insight into modern magisterial understanding of the interface of social sin and moral agency.

CHAPTER FOUR

SYNTHESIS OF SELECTED DOCUMENTS

It is not enough for Christians to denounce injustices. They are also required to be truly witnesses to, and agents of, justice.

> Pope John Paul II, *Address to Workers in Guadalajara* (1979)

Introduction

The magisterial documents that were analyzed in the previous chapter provide a wealth of data which reveal how persons of authority in the church over the past several decades have used their teaching office to elucidate the knotty problem of adapting traditional understandings of moral agency to fit both the "modern world" and the novel challenges presented by social sin. Before proceeding with a synthesis of those many details into coherence using the five heuristic questions developed in chapter two, a fundamental point of controversy is dealt with first, given as example of how apparent disparities in thinking may actually be less acute than they seem when various texts are brought together and examined side-by-side.

After the Second Vatican Council, tensions existing between two great *magisteria*, the papal voice emanating from the Vatican and the episcopal leaders of the church in Latin America, tensions epitomized by the silencing of the Brazilian theologian Leonardo Boff in

the mid-1980s, arose, at least partially, in contestation about a core understanding of human

agency in relation to sin. While the Roman magisterium may have looked with some

trepidation on the growing acceptance of social sin as a theological category, fearing

perhaps that such a broad notion might undermine personal responsibility in sin, such was

not the contention in what the Latin American magisterium was actually teaching. Bishop

Eduardo Pironio, Secretary General of CELAM, for example, always maintained that

situations of sin originate and cohere from individuals through extensions of their personal

agency: "There arise situations which, although subjectively free from immediate

responsibility of many, nevertheless result objectively in situations of sin."[1] The position of

the liberation theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez may be even more nuanced in the direction of a

stronger tie between personal sin and social injustice; as was noted in chapter one, his

"bottom line" in this matter is abundantly clear: "The importance of the social consequences

of sin does not mean forgetting that sin is always the result of a personal, free act."[2] Pope

John Paul II's position that sin "is an act of freedom on the part of an individual and not

properly of a group or community"[3] is not very different from Latin American thinking in

this matter. Such is the opinion of Margaret Pfeil who, after a careful reading of various

magisterial texts, concludes: "The Latin American bishops did not understand the use of

---

[1]Eduardo Pironio, *La Iglesia que nace entre nosotros* (Bogota: Indo-American Press Service, 1970), 64; quoted in Pfeil, "The Language of Social Sin," 70.

[2]Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The Truth Shall Make You Free*, 137.

[3]Pope John Paul II, *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, §16, 35.

terms such as 'structural sin' and 'situations of sin' to undermine the role of personal

agency in sin."[4]

There may be other areas of commonality to be revealed in the selected texts as both

bishops and pope grapple with the difficult fit of personal moral agency onto social sin. It is

to that illuminative task that this chapter of the dissertation will now turn.

Question One: "How does each source understand the ways that our inherited social circumstances impact our moral agency?"

The dynamic interrelationship of the "sin of the world" and the human beings who

both suffer its effects and participate in its continuance is an ancient phenomenon in religion

and an enigmatic mystery in theology. The matters which pertain here are more than of

mere sociological interest: at stake are fundamental axioms related to theological

anthropology as well as philosophical principles regarding the limits of human freedom.

Interpretation of these parameters is fundamental to comprehending how the several

magisterial documents consider the impact of the social situation on the human

responsibility to act morally.

Both the Latin American bishops and Pope John Paul II understand the person as

limited to some degree by the surrounding society with its suspect, deeply imbedded moral

---

[4]Pfeil, "The Language of Social Sin," 70; at this point Pfeil is discussing only the documents produced at Medellín. Later on though, she reiterates that both of the CELAM texts (Medellín and Puebla) sought to render the social dimensions of sin intelligible "while remaining faithful to traditional understandings of the essential role of personal agency in sin," ibid., 95.

values. Social sin results when unjust economic disparities and other oppressive conditions in a society grow and become so entrenched as to become systemic; the "social structures"[5] which result persist beyond the capacity of any single person to control, and operate contrary to God's will which is for an equitable distribution of the goods of the earth being available for all persons. A further dimension to the problem occurs when moral action to change the inequitable situation is stifled, a condition witnessed by the perdurance of economic injustice and worldwide poverty. One of the things that particularly scandalized the CELAM bishops at Puebla was the disparity between the gospel values they preached and the economic reality of the poor in Latin America:

> The people of Latin America continue to live in a social situation that contradicts the fact that they inhabit a continent which is Christian for the most part. The contradictions existing between unjust social structures and the demands of the Gospel are quite evident.[6]

The supposition undergirding this lament is that there *is* a direct connection between the moral status of the agent and any social actions performed by that person. The rank inequality of the Latin American situation contradicts the expectation that the external social milieu found in a predominantly Christian culture operates normatively for moral action—either that, or the gospel message has not really taken hold. The bishops of the

---

[5]*Social structures* is a term that is widely used but not unequivocally defined: the phenomenon of social structures appears more as a "felt presence" than a tangible "thing," although their impalpability does not diminish the reality of their effects. Peter J. Henriot presents the concept thus: "In modern society these structures—systems and institutions, socio-economic-political arrangements—are very real entities and with a life of their own, embody highly influential norms and sets of values, and have immense potential for an impact that can be either good or bad," Peter J. Henriot, "Social Sin and Conversion: A Theology of the Church's Social Involvement," *Chicago Studies* 11 (Sum 1972), 119.

[6]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 192.

Third General Conference are forced to conclude: "Our continent is Christian down to its very core . . . [but] the faith, as a norm of life and a total way of living together, does not have the desired impact on the personal and social conduct of many Christians."[7] Perhaps social circumstances *other* than the preached gospel and lived life of the Catholic community may be overwhelming the church's message and causing the situation of sin, the reality of which can not itself be denied.

The notion that the culture negatively impacts moral agency, to such a degree that the society as a whole operates in ways counterproductive to gospel values, had been suggested at the bishops' meeting at Medellín eleven years earlier. Bishop Samuel Ruiz García in his Position Paper in *Ponencias*, "Evangelization in Latin America" (*La evangelización en América Latina*), identifies the forces in "the urban society . . . [the influence of] public opinion, the office, the club, the means of communication" as creating the "'milieu'[—]that group of values, ideas, and models which . . . unconsciously forms mentalities, imposing criteria and ways of action"— that lies at the cause of the reprehensible social situation.[8] In other words, the influence of the church's teachings is undermined by the ambient society. Moral agency here is still held as subject to external influences: it becomes a matter of who wins the battle in the determination of values (and thus far it has not been the church).

The bishops at the Second General Conference in Medellín first questioned but then reaffirmed their own efficacy in impressing Christian values onto the culture in which they

[7]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 197-98.

[8]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 1*, Position Papers*, 163.

operated. Not at all satisfied with what he sees in "The Signs of the Time in Latin America Today" (*Los signos de los tiempos en América Latina hoy*), Bishop Marcos McGrath states very forcefully in his opening Position Paper in *Ponencias* that the church "can insist on a pedagogy of change."[9] He later writes:

> She [the institutional Church] can awaken the conscience and indeed form it, even indicate the more obvious paths of action to be taken . . . that favor the integral development of our peoples and countries. . . . She can, and indeed ought where proper and possible, to support, in collaboration with other social forces, all those tasks of promotion and development that can serve as models and incentives for the whole process.[10]

There is expressed here a faith both that "the word of God is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword" (Heb 4:12), and that social circumstances can affect moral action positively as well as negatively. Can the church operating from "without" affect moral agency "within" so convincingly as to effect substantive social change? Bishop McGrath would apparently say yes.

A dialectical argument, however, is also advanced in the magisterial texts, one which looks at the person, both singly and combined into social cohorts, as more fully responsible for the social conditions in which moral agency is exercised. For the bishops of Latin America, an obvious quarry for critique relevant here is the elite group of the rich who are presumed to be at the controls of the unjust social mechanisms which directly result in economic injustice. Bishop Marcos McGrath zeros right in on the wealthy as responsible, and sinfully so, for obstructing the progress of the poor when he criticizes "the selfishness

---

[9] CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 1*, Position Papers*, 89.

[10] CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 1*, Position Papers*, 104.

of certain privileged groups which, in order to benefit from their own privileges, refuse to open themselves to the more necessary socio-economic changes."[11] This same point is reiterated in the second volume of *The Church in the Present-Day Transformation of Latin America in Light of the Council*, *Conclusions*, when in Topic 7, Pastoral Concern for the Elites, the Latin American bishops again assign blame for the status-quo misery of the poor onto the elites:

> The Traditionalists or Conservatives [speaking of the "elites," the powerful secular leaders within Latin American society] show little or no social conscience, have a middle-class orientation and consequently do not question the social structures. In general they are primarily concerned with preserving their privileges, which they identify with the "established order." Their community action takes the character of paternalism and almsgiving, with no concern for changing the status quo.[12]

There is an "edge" to the critique here: the bishops fault the moral actions of those who hold the power in society as culpable in furthering the wretched plight of the poor; by their refusal to alter the underlying causes for poverty, the well-off abet the continuance of sinful circumstances in the deplorable situation of widespread poverty.

---

[11]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 1*, Position Papers*, 102-3. Bishop Luis E. Henríquez's characterization of the rich given in a subsequent Position Paper, "Pastoral Care of the Masses and the Elite" (*Pastoral de masas y pastoral de élites*) is perhaps even more withering: "The social elites, particularly in the economic, industrial, and social areas . . . are for the most part [often] devoid of social awareness or have a dull sense of it"; CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 1*, Position Papers*, 222.

[12]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 130. The bishops of the Third General Conference in Puebla were of much the same mind in their social analysis, here finding the selfishness of the well-to-do so reprehensible as to be understandable only by linking it to the very mystery of sin: "All the forms of bondage, from personal and social sin, and from everything that tears apart the human individual and society . . . finds its source to be in egotism, in the mystery of iniquity"; CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 104-5.

Pope John Paul II also sees the person as responsible for the situation of social sin. He explains human selfishness, though, in more abstract terms, employing a theological anthropology which accounts for this overweening self-love as a misuse of God's gift of freedom. He writes in *Centesimus annus*:

> The socioeconomic consequences of . . . this error consists in an understanding of human freedom which detaches it from obedience to the truth, and consequently from the duty to respect the rights of others. The essence of freedom then becomes self-love carried to the point of contempt for God and neighbour, a self-love which leads to an unbridled affirmation of self-interest and which refuses to be limited by any demand of justice.[13]

The teaching of the pontiff here is that immoral actions arise out of a faulty exercise of human freedom in properly shaping the outside world, a freedom—importantly—which is deemed more or less unencumbered by any constraints imposed by external social influences on the individual. The presumption here is that reattaching human freedom to "obedience to the truth" will obviate the self-interest which lies at the root of sin and thereby allow for meaningful reform of persistent economic injustice.

Earlier in *On Social Concern*, in his defense of the proper meaning to be accorded the concept of social sin, John Paul II had made a similar argument about the imprint of sinful humanity on the world when he explained the way that individual sin leads to social sin:

> If the present situation can be attributed to difficulties of various kinds, it is not out of place to speak of 'structures of sin,' which, as I stated in my Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*, are rooted in personal sin, and thus always linked to the *concrete acts* of individuals who introduce these structures, consolidate them and

---

[13]Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus annus*, §17, 451.

make them difficult to remove. And thus they grow stronger, spread, and become the source of other sins, and so influence people's behavior.[14]

John Paul II's line of thinking basically recapitulates what the Latin American bishops at the Third General Conference in Puebla, Mexico said when they identified sin as "operative both within the hearts of human beings, and within the various structures which they have created and on which they have left the destructive imprint of their sinfulness [*sic*]."[15] The argument here is direct: the movement is outward from the individual onto society; the person through selfish actions creates the environment for further personal sin, even social sin.[16]

---

[14]Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, §36, 419.

[15]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 75. Note: the Latin American bishops use the word "sin" (*el pecado*) straightforwardly in their text—not "sinfulness."

[16]Again, commonality in magisterial teaching on this point can be seen in the close approximation of John Paul II's thinking presented by the Latin American bishops meeting in Puebla some eight years earlier: "Sinfulness [*sic*] on the personal level . . . is always mirrored on the level of interpersonal relations in a corresponding egotism, haughtiness, ambition, and envy. These traits produce injustice, domination, violence at every level, and conflicts between individuals, groups, social classes, and peoples. . . . Thus they establish sinful situations which, at the worldwide level, enslave countless human beings and adversely affect the freedom of all"; CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 83. "Pero a la actitud personal del pecado . . . corresponde siempre en el plano de las relaciones interpersonales, la actitud de egoísmo, de orgullo, de ambición y envidia que generan injusticia, dominación, violencia a todos los niveles; lucha entre individuos, grupos, clases sociales y pueblos . . . consiguientemente se establecen situaciones de pecado que, a nivel mundial, esclavizan a tantos hombres y condicionan adversamente la libertad de todos [§328]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 110-11. It is interesting to note that the Spanish word *actitud*, often translated as "attitude" or "disposition," is etymologically much closer to the word "to act" (*actuar*) than comes across in the English. The Spanish terminology implies that one's state of mind ("attitude") is more closely connected to how one acts (*actitud*) than how it "fits" one's thinking about something.

Just as the individual is the cause of the social situation of sin, it is often also the individual, operating apart from the community, who is presented by John Paul II as the moral agent responsible for and capable of its amelioration. The pope had already declared in *Reconciliatio et paenitentia* §16: "Also social is every sin against the common good," and it is to this notion that he returns in *On Social Concern* when he argues that achievement of the common good is the way to both overcome economic injustice and attain human fulfillment. In his explanation of the "*transcendent reality* of the human being," John Paul II fixes the locus for changing the outside world clearly within the interior purview of the individual as a matter of mastering human desire: "Development cannot consist only in the use, dominion over and *indiscriminate* possession of created things and the products of human industry, but rather in *subordinating* the possession, dominion and use to man's [*sic*] divine likeness and to his vocation to immortality."[17] According to the pope's theological anthropology, "true" human development is achieved by training the appetites through force of will. Humankind can—is really quite free to—create a world of peace and justice according to God's plan through moral discipline.

It is exactly this crucial question of the limits of human freedom, though, that appears to be a continual sticking point for the magisteria. On the one hand, societal influences are presented as seemingly having an existence all their own; while not created or willed by any one individual, these social and cultural ideologies nonetheless operate with a kind of independent agency that can help lead individuals astray. This is certainly the impression left when the CELAM III bishops talk about the forces which sway opinion and

---

[17]Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, §29, 414.

impinge on human freedom of action: "The ideologies that are in vogue know that universities are an ideal place for them to infiltrate and to gain control over culture and society."[18] It is to counteract the influence of distorted social values (consumerism, for example), that the church must work to train the "builders of a new society . . . [by] promulgating the gospel message."[19] In order to achieve this end, the bishops at Puebla later explain, "The Church must more and more each day become the voice of the dispossessed,"[20] pitching their evangelical ideology against the blunting impact of temporal ideologies going in the opposite direction. The individual in this scheme comes across more as a pawn caught up in the contest of competing ideological forces (materialistic vs. evangelical), and not so much as a discerning moral agent with an unfettered conscience able to operate freely.

Such agential capacity accorded impersonal cultural forces is also suggested in Pope John Paul II's 1994 Apostolic Letter *Tertio millennio adveniente*, when—while regretting certain actions of the past ("the acquiescence given, especially in certain centuries, to intolerance and even the use of violence in the service of truth")—the pontiff allows for ascribing a lesser degree of individual culpability in such cases because of the influence of the ambient persuasive ideologies, namely, "The cultural conditioning of the times, as a result of which many people may have held in good faith that an authentic witness to the

[18]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 168.

[19]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 168.

[20]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 173.

truth could include suppressing the opinions of others."[21] Here a person's moral agency is construed by the pope as under the duress of the encompassing culture (at least sometimes); when such is the case, the mitigating factors are presented as exonerating (at least partially).

At other times in the magisterial documents, though, the pendulum seems to swing back to the person as fully responsible, and singly so, for moral action; the influence of any immoderate social forces is discounted and the moral path is seen as clear. John Paul II, in particular, espouses this position in *Reconciliatio et paenitentia* when he writes, as was quoted earlier: "Sin, in the proper sense, is always a personal act, since it is an act of freedom on the part of an individual and not properly of a group or community."[22] The pope seems particularly concerned lest any consideration given the influence of circumstances be taken to undermine the final disposition of the individual to act freely: "[While] such external and internal factors may attenuate, to a greater or lesser degree, the person's freedom and therefore his responsibility and guilt . . . this truth [of ultimate freedom] cannot be disregarded in order to place the blame for individuals' sins on external factors such as structures, systems or other people."[23] Even with large-scale social

---

[21]*Tertio millennio adveniente*, §35. In the last analysis, the pope admits that "the consideration of mitigating factors does not exonerate the Church from the obligation to express profound regret for the weaknesses of so many of her sons and daughters who sullied her face, preventing her from fully mirroring the image of her crucified Lord, the supreme witness of patient love and of humble meekness"; ibid.

[22]Pope John Paul II, *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, §16, 35.

[23]Ibid., §16, 36. Even when the pope gives a nod towards a "situated" human free will, he still returns to his core belief that the person is ultimately free and responsible: "Nevertheless, it cannot be forgotten that the manner in which the individual exercises his freedom is conditioned in innumerable ways. While these certainly have an influence on freedom, they do not determine it; they make the exercise of freedom more difficult or less

phenomena which "almost always become anonymous, just as their causes are complex and not always identifiable," there is no getting around the individual's absolute freedom of moral action: "To speak even analogically of social sins must not cause us to underestimate the responsibility of the individuals involved. It is meant to be an appeal to the consciences of all, so that each may shoulder his or her responsibility seriously and courageously in order to change those disastrous conditions and intolerable situations."[24]

The final perspective of magisterial thinking regarding the ways that our inherited social circumstances impact our moral agency is not easily summed up, mostly because the voices which have been gleaned from the magisterial texts are not univocal and the points of view are therefore difficult to align. While certainly not wanting the moral agent to be "let off the hook" as regards accountability for actions taken, the magisteria offer some appreciation for the context of the social situation as a shaping, if not predominating, influence. Extrapersonal factors bearing influence, whether it be the gospel message or the unchecked consumerism of the bourgeoisie, are taken to be active "players" in an ideological struggle to gain dominion over the consciousness of individuals; and in doing so, these external social influences greatly affect the decisions made by persons as moral agents.

---

difficult, but they cannot destroy it," John Paul II, *Centesimus annus*, §25, 457. This is essentially the same position taken by Thomas Aquinas: recall Gregory Doolan's conclusion that "according to Thomas, the false conscience inculcated by cultural mores does not excuse from sin altogether. Even when custom does prevail over an individual's choices, the moral agent nonetheless remains responsible for his individual acts"; Doolan, "Culpability in Thomas Aquinas," 124. Thus, the ability of the individual to use human reason to discern natural law is inviolable; even culturally imposed and widely accepted norms can not trump God's true, universal principles which are innately known and which, therefore, must be followed.

[24]Pope John Paul II, *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, §16, 38.

However determinative the impact of social forces from without may be construed, though, the role and responsibility of the person is never taken out of the equation. Next to consider, then, will be what the documents reveal about magisterial teaching on the question of how individual actions contribute to social sin: the limits of personal accountability in the context of social agency.

Question Two: "To what degree and in what manner do the texts conceptualize how individual actions contribute to social sin?"

The concern in the magisterial documents over the limits of individual accountability for social sin in relation to the society which influences personal moral agency—and the question of which one predominates—evident in the synthesis of the first heuristic question, are operative in this second one as well. Certainly the CELAM bishops, and later Pope John Paul II himself, recognize the reality of social sin. But the taxonomic categories necessary to explain how it arises and who is held accountable for its evil are never fully articulated. Knowing only that human beings sin is a necessary first-step in determining accountability to be sure, but it is hardly a sufficient final point on which to understand the dynamics at play here in the matter of social sin. Without a methodology capable of easily moving over from established patterns of dealing with personal sin, the magisteria struggle to adapt old categories onto the phenomenon of social sin as it is newly appreciated in the post-Vatican II era. This section of the dissertation will assess the degree to which the weight of centuries of understanding sin to exist only on the personal level limits the ability

of the magisteria to fashion novel hamartiological understandings for sinfulness beyond the individual.

Another force at work here is the very nature of the question being asked: to explain how one person's actions relate to another's requires some appreciation of the perspective of human psychology and, specifically, social psychology. While the bishops from Latin America and Rome are clearly desirous of faithfully fulfilling their "responsibility of reading the signs of the time and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel," they are not sociologists; and while hearing the cry of the worldwide poor is impossible to avoid, in the end they are not economists. Without incisive psychological, sociological, and economic analysis available in their "toolbox," the teachers of the faith end up better at identifying the effects of social sin than its source or cure. At bottom is the question of whether the parenesis of magisterial teachers is undercut by their limited ability to handle the technical nonreligious complexities related to social sin. When the magisterial texts are examined to discern an interpretation of how individual actions contribute to social sin, the end result disclosed is indeterminate, similar in a way to the magisterial response to the first question: the individual is always the responsible, single agent, and yet, the social forces from "without" and the turbid context of moral action in the modern world seem also to obscure the clear ethical path.

On one hand, the link between individual and social sin is construed rather straightforwardly: near the end of their long analysis, the episcopate meeting at Puebla flatly declares: "There are many causes for this situation of injustice; but at the root of them all we find sin, both on the personal level and in structures themselves."[25] But the core

---

[25]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 192.

question remains: what causes the sin in the first place? Indeed, in the matter of social sin is the question of how is it exactly that the sin of the individual "gets into" the structures to make them sinful? The bishops at Medellín had identified a culprit, but one of rather vague outlines, namely, "The lack of solidarity which, on the individual and social levels, leads to the committing of serious ["real"] sins, evident in the unjust structures which characterize the Latin American situation."[26] The lack of solidarity between the "haves" and the "have-nots" appears to be at the root of the *verdaderos pecados*, but—once again—what is the cause of the deficiency in social harmony in the first place? The rich are an easy target for the Latin American bishops to blame, but even as they indict the well-to-do, the bishops do not really specify how the wealthy members of society commit their evil, or if all are equally culpable, except to note that they are weak and selfish: "Many have demonstrated a faith with little strength to overcome their egotism, their individualism, and their greedy hold on riches. They have acted unjustly and injured the unity of society and the Church itself."[27]

Pope John Paul II is not so concerned to explain the genesis of social sin as he is to insist that, at bottom, it is individual sinners who are its perpetrators.[28] This perspective is

---

[26]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 58. Margaret Pfeil finds "noteworthy here . . . the specific reference to the structural manifestation of serious sin and the fact that such sin is traced to behavior considered in both individual and social terms"; see Pfeil, "The Language of Social Sin," 61.

[27]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 159.

[28]Even the specific evil actions constituting social sin are catalogued in relatively general terms, as sins "against justice in interpersonal relationships . . . against the rights of the human person   . . . against a person's physical integrity . . . against others' freedom . . . [even] against the common good," Pope John Paul II, *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, §16, 37. Acknowledging the existence of social sin, but not recognizing its differentiation from personal sin limits, in the end, what can be said and done about it.

abundantly clear in the passage from §16 of his Apostolic Exhortation, *Reconciliation and Penance*, which has already been quoted:

> Whenever the church speaks of situations of sin or when she condemns as social sins certain situations or the collective behavior of certain social groups, big or small, or even of whole nations and blocs of nations, she knows and she proclaims that such cases of social sin are the result of the accumulation and concentration of many personal sins. It is a case of the very personal sins of those who cause or support evil or who exploit it . . . The real responsibility, then, lies with individuals.[29]

Surely sin has multiple effects,[30] but can social sin arise from a complex of actions which are perhaps not in and of themselves each sinful? Without a real explanation of how sinfulness actually operates in the contemporary world, especially in its social context, knowing that it can aggregate and even spread its evil influence does not fully explain the processes of interrelatedness operating here—still less how to change the dynamics involved.

The magisteria's difficulty in adequately comprehending the changes in the modern world which have revealed new dimensions to sin is evident in their attempts at sociological analysis. In Puebla, the bishops at the Third General Conference are overwhelmed by "the dizzying flood of cultural, social, economic, political, and technological changes in the

---

[29]Ibid., §16, 39. The pontiff repeats this notion that many sins together constitute social sin, though without articulating the processes of synergy at work here, in his encyclical *On Social Concern* of a few years later: "The true *nature* of the evil which faces us with respect to the development of people: it is a question of a *moral evil*, the fruit of *many sins* which lead to 'structures of sin,'" Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, §37, 420.

[30]John Paul II himself argues that sinning through disobedience to the latter five of the Ten Commandments is "to offend God and hurt one's neighbor, and to introduce into the world influences and obstacles which go far beyond the actions and brief life span of an individual"; Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, §37, 420.

modern age."[31] With such an array of forces competing with the message of the gospel to

contend with, the Latin American bishops point to vague ideologies constitutive in the

culture as the root of the conflict of values; they identify: "a notably critical-minded sense"

of the people, "indifferentism," "a false interpretation of religious pluralism," "religious

ignorance," and a host of other forces of secularization, as the culprits here.[32] Such

conceptualizations, taken to be operating as influencing powers in the society, presumably

function as mitigating factors to some extent since they impinge on the individual from

without. But these nonpersonal forces—though they "act"—are not agents in themselves,

and so do not excuse definitively; according to the magisterial texts, it is the individual with

absolute freedom of action who is held wholly responsible for sin. In light of this episcopal

analysis, moral obligations are, in the end, simply aggregated: the Christian is called to resist

the negative cultural influences as well as avoid particular sinful acts.[33] Ideologies may

indeed be components, and important ones, in the fostering of social sin. What is lacking

here though, is specific teaching on how individual actions contribute to those systems of

---

[31]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 47.

[32]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 47.

[33]Pope John Paul II says more or less the same thing in his 1991 encyclical,
Centesimus annus. He urges the faithful to adopt "a correct scale of values . . . so that the
ownership of things may become an occasion of growth," and he cautions against
"manipulation by the means of mass communication, which impose fashions and trends of
opinion through carefully orchestrated repetition," Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus annus*,
§41, 470. Blaming impersonal cultural influences within a society for the problems of
severe economic disparity does little to help the struggling Christian understand the impact
of these "false ideologies" on personal decision-making; nor does it offer an effective or
practical prescription for reducing social sin in its complex socio-economic reality.

false values,[34] under what conditions personal decisions related to those ideologies may actually be considered sinful, and exactly how and where—beyond responding positively to the ethical exhortation to exhibit greater virtue—individuals can make specific changes in their lifestyle and actions to combat the countervailing influences of the ambient society.

A most interesting and salient point is made, however, late in the documents produced at the bishops' meeting in Puebla. As was noted in the analysis of the episcopal texts in the previous chapter, the Latin American bishops were careful at both Medellín and Puebla to detatch from the role of clergy any personal requirement themselves to help remedy the *causes* of social problems and economic inequities: at the Second General Conference the bishops write, "In the economic and social order, however, and especially in the political order, where a variety of concrete choices is offered, the priest, as priest, should not directly concern himself with decisions or leadership nor with the structuring of solutions";[35] and at the Third General Conference they teach, "The priest always operates . . . so as not to fall into the temptation of becoming a political leader, social director, or functionary of some temporal authority."[36] But, and here the converse point made is what is important, with "lay people [who] are situated . . . in the world . . . they are pledged to

[34]Sometimes there is mention made of a vague transference of human concupiscence onto the ambient society (but without any sharp analysis of the exact means of action here): "We see a crisis in moral values . . . when the human person, called to have dominion over the world, impregnates the mechanisms of society with materialistic values"; CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 46.

[35]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 179-80.

[36]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 133.

the construction of the Kingdom in its temporal dimension,"[37] and their involvement in finding solutions is meet: thus, to the province of the laity falls the task of effecting social and economic transformation. In advancing this responsibility overtly, the bishops at Puebla make another salient point about the nature of social sin and how the laity can be of great service not only to the church but to the larger society as a whole:

> Finally, a fact of particular seriousness is the insufficient effort invested in discerning the causes and conditionings of social reality, particularly with regard to the means and instruments for transforming society. This is needed to shed light on the activity of Christians if they are to avoid uncritical assimilation of ideologies on the one hand or a spirituality of evasion on the other. This also enables them to go beyond mere denunciation and to find courses of action.[38]

While the above statement does not directly explain how individual actions contribute to social sin, it does indicate a direction to go in trying to uncover and then undo that process, namely insightful social analysis under lay direction and leadership. The implication behind the call to the laity to become agents of cultural critique is that in "discerning the causes and conditionings of social reality," they might also, in fact, come to disclose what would be those personal actions and acts of responsibility needed to overcome social sin.

The magisterial voice emanating from Rome during this era, while acknowledging the need for social analysis, relies much more on argumentation redolent of scholastic theology to explain the mechanisms by which individual actions develop into social sin.[39]

---

[37]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 142.

[38]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 146.

[39]Recall John Paul II's emphasis on sin as transgression, the knowing breach of an intuitively divined law of God: "Once the moral species of an action prohibited by a universal rule is concretely recognized, the only morally good act is that of obeying the

For example, in *Reconciliation and Penance* Pope John Paul II falls back on abstractions such as "rupture with God . . . [in which one's] internal balance is also destroyed"[40] to explain the "The Mystery of Sin," as the first chapter of his Apostolic Exhortation is entitled. Individual actions, the pope continues, create "damage to the fabric of his [*sic*, i.e., a person's] relationship with others and with the created world."[41] This appeal to *disruption* and *damage* as the explanatory mechanisms for the effects of personal sin onto the social world has a certain metaphysical appeal to it, but the thinking here falls short of being incisive social analysis. In the end, the pontiff's reasoning comes across as more circular than expository: "Therefore one can speak of personal and social sin: From one point of view, every sin is personal; from another point of view, every sin is social insofar as and because it also has social repercussions."[42]

Regardless of any inadequacies which may have been imputed above, John Paul II does make an important and significant contribution to understanding how individual actions contribute to social sin with his repeated emphasis on sin as *omission* of ethical behavior, or the failure to do the good: in *Reconciliation and Penance*, he writes that social

---

moral law and of refraining from the action which it forbids," *VS* §67.

[40]Pope John Paul II, *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, §15, 35.

[41]Ibid. In the next section of the Apostolic Exhortation, the pope reiterates this basic point: "Every sin has repercussions on the entire ecclesial body and the whole human family. According to this first meaning of the term, every sin can undoubtedly be considered as social sin," ibid., §16, 37.

[42]Ibid., §15, 35. A certain vagueness in the papal argument here is also suggested when John Paul II states later that, "each individual's sin in some way affects others," ibid., §16, 36.

sin pertains to "sins of commission or omission . . . [by those] who though in a position to do so, do not work diligently and wisely for the improvement and transformation of society according to the requirements and potential of the given historical moment."[43] A little later the pope again decries the actions of "those who are in a position to avoid, eliminate or at least limit certain social evils but who fail to do so out of laziness, fear or the conspiracy of silence, through secret complicity or indifference; of those who take refuge in the supposed impossibility of changing the world and also of those who sidestep the effort and sacrifice required, producing specious reasons of higher order."[44] Sin as omission of ethical behavior opens up the possibility of regarding sinfulness apart from (and beyond) direct actions for which the agent can clearly be held accountable, and allows for consideration of culpability, or at least complicity, in sinful situations which we allow to perdure.

Whatever inadequacies may fairly be ascribed to the magisterial teaching on how individual actions contribute to social sin, any such judgment made would be not so much an indictment of ecclesiastic performance as a realization of the difficulty of their struggle with the unfamiliar and complex task being undertaken. In dealing with the large-scale phenomenon of social sin, the magisteria tend to take up and simply transfer over accepted moral categories and ways of thinking about personal sin—and sometimes that shifting

---

[43]Ibid.

[44]Ibid., §16, 39. The pope considers sin of omission as possible for collective entities such as whole countries and their oligarchies, too: "Responsibility for this deterioration [in economic development] is due to various causes. Notable among them are undoubtedly grave instances of omissions on the part of the developing nations themselves, and especially on the part of those holding economic and political power," Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, §16, 404.

over, such as the focusing on individual actions only in isolation, just does not work. Their

teaching ends up locating the problem one step further removed, as it were: onto the culture

which is simultaneously declared blameworthy of immorality, and yet also agencyless, as it

is always the individual who is alone morally responsible. Considering prescriptions for

ameliorating the devastating effects of social sin (reviewed in the next section of this

chapter) will hopefully shed additional light on how the individual does act both socially and

morally.

Question Three: "How do the sources articulate our moral response to rectify social sin in terms of both personal decisions and collective actions?"

A human being is never at liberty simply to ignore sin: one's own failings must be

acknowledged and turned around, and those of one's neighbor(s) charitably brought to their

attention.[45] The case of social sin is really no different: it must be recognized as evil and not

allowed to continue unchecked. The problem is that personal accountability for social sin is

difficult to locate and its recision is harder to achieve by individual effort. As a result of this

moral diffusion, so to speak, the magisterial authors of the selected documents look

principally to reviving the conscience of the individual Christian as the necessary first-step in

---

[45]"Though you may have to reprove your fellow man, do not incur sin because of him" (Lev 19:17), and, "If your brother sins, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone" (Mt 18:15).

overcoming social sin, rather than to outlining specific plans of action to be followed by the faithful as a group.[46]

The Latin American bishops maintain the important distinction between the process of *conscientization*, a term developed by the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire and representing an idea of particular currency around the time of the CELAM meeting at Medellín, and what in common lexicon is called *consciousness-raising*. Freire argues in his classic book *Pedagogy for the Oppressed*, that *conscientizaçao* is a revolution in thinking necessary for the poor first to understand and then to effect change in their worldly situation.[47] A fellow Brazilian, Bishop Eugenio de Araújo Sales, argues strongly in this regard that the role of the church in rectifying social sin starts with shifting mentalities, that is, supporting the poor in a cognitive and social self-transformation: "Parishes [are to] become centers of authentic formation of the human-Christian communities, not only places for administration of the sacraments and proclamation of the truths of the Gospel. . . . Men [*sic*] are to be awakened to the meaning of their dignity . . . encouraging them to demand . .

---

[46]"To us, the Pastors of the Church, belongs the duty to educate the Christian conscience"; CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 80.

[47]The explanation given by Gustavo Gutiérrez of the process by which the poor reject an oppressive consciousness is helpful here: "They [the oppressed] thus make the transfer from a 'naive awareness'—which does not deal with problems, gives too much value to the past, tends to accept mythical explanations, and tends toward debate—to a 'critical awareness'—which delves into problems, is open to new ideas, replaces magical explanations with real causes, and tends to dialogue. . . . they become, by themselves, less dependent and freer, as they commit themselves to the transformation and building up of society," Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*, revised edition with a new introduction (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 57.

. the respect due the human person and his inalienable rights."[48] For the rich, the task for the church is different: with them it needs to prick their conscience and raise into their consciousness the plight of the poor, and their responsibility in it. The bishops at the Second General Conference teach that the evangelization of the elites "must clearly delineate in eschatological perspectives the values of justice and brotherhood so deeply embedded in the aspirations of the common people."[49] The assumption underlying this call is that in breaching the "dichotomy between faith and social responsibility"[50] which exists among the powerful in society, the pastors will spur those presumed to be the direct causal agents of economic injustice to rectify the situation of social sin by creating more equitable structures. In the face of social sin the moral response of the church, then, is presented primarily as one of cognitive restructuring: for the poor, to bolster their own social assertiveness, and for the rich, to help them reconsider the error of their oppressive ways.[51]

---

[48]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 1*, Position Papers*, 142.

[49]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 132.

[50]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 131.

[51]Along with the elites, other privileged members of society are, in a more passive way, likewise complicit in the commission of social sin; the Latin American bishops strive pointedly to raise into their consciousness the fact that "also responsible for injustice are those who [do not act on behalf of justice with the means at their disposal and] remain passive for fear of the sacrifice and personal risk implied by any courageous and effective action"; CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 79. {"Son, también, responsables de la injusticia todos los que no actúan en favor de la justicia con los medios de que disponen, y permanecen pasivos por temor a los sacrificios y a los riesgos personales que implica toda acción audaz y verdaderamente eficaz"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, *II Conclusiones*, 73.} Cf. John Paul II's critique of injustice as sin of omission in the ethical behavior of those persons who wield power in society in *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, §16, 39 and *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, §16, 404 [footnote no. 44 above in this chapter].

At Puebla the bishops of the Third General Conference are careful to note that while there is a difference in emphasis in the messages to the poor and the rich in Latin America, there is but one gospel preached: "Moving beyond the differentiation between pastoral care of elites and pastoral care of the common people, our pastoral effort is one single effort."[52] The solution to this delicate balancing act is presented in terms of *preference*, one message of God's love to all, but weighted differently: extended as a "preferential concern" [*preocupación preferencial*] for the rights of the poor (§1217),[53] and an additional "preferential concern" for young people as a privileged force for the transformation of society (§1218). The preference to be accorded the poor had been expressed at the earlier episcopal conference in Medellín as well, with a call focused on throwing open the doors of opportunity for education of the disadvantaged, a liberative process which "converts the student into the subject of his own development,"[54] and allows the poor to indeed become "authors of their own progress."[55] With a preference in place retipping the scales into some equilibrium, the poor would be no longer dependent upon the largesse of those in power but could fashion their own destinies; in §1146 of *Conclusions*, the CELAM III bishops quote verbatim from §8 of the Vatican II document "Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People" to bolster this point:

---

[52]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 187.

[53]A "preferential commitment to the poor," and, of course, a "preferential option for the poor" are other terms freely used by the bishops to express the same idea.

[54]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 99.

[55]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 98.

The demands of justice must first of all be satisfied; that which is already due in justice is not to be offered as a gift of charity. The causes of evils, and not merely their effects, ought to disappear. The aid contributed should be organized in such a way that beneficiaries are gradually freed from their dependence on others and become self-supporting.[56]

This empowerment of the oppressed, beyond mere charitable support, is a significant advance in magisterial teaching regarding the correct moral response to our participation in social sin.

As has been already noted, in terms of effecting any significant change the Latin American bishops consistently and carefully distinguish the roles of the clergy and the laity, the former charged primarily with elevating the consciences of "the elites" and the latter put in charge of substantive social change more directly.[57] This ascription of a bifurcated moral responsibility for social transformation falling largely on the shoulders of the laity, under the inspiration of the clergy,[58] is reminiscent of the stance taken by the hierarchy as regards the

---

[56]*Apostolicam actuositatem*, §8, 776.

[57]The bishops at Puebla further propose: "To educate all family members in justice and love so that they can be responsible, solidary, and effective agents in promoting Christian solutions for the complex social issue in Latin America"; CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 123.

[58]"For its part the hierarchy will demonstrate [bestow] its solidarity by contributing to their [the laity's] adequate formation and their spiritual life . . . nurturing their creativity so that they can explore options that are increasingly in line with the common good and the needs of the weakest"; CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 110. These sentiments closely parallel the episcopal teaching from Medellín: "To promote the integral development of man [*sic*], they [the priests] will educate and encourage the laity to participate actively and with a Christian conscience in the technique and elaboration of progress"; CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 179.

Catholic Action movement which flourished during the papacy of Pius XI (1922-1939).[59]

With the activities of the clergy circumscribed so, the basic function of priests becomes

restricted exclusively to the hortatory. Rather than engage directly in social promotion, the

members of the hierarchy are called to rely exclusively on the work of lay persons for that

purpose, continuing the pre-Vatican II idea that the People of God are not one entity, but

two;[60] specifically, when it comes to rectifying social sin, "They [lay persons] carry out the

mission that is specifically theirs, that is, when they are sent out into the very midst of life in

---

[59]Catholic Action developed in the early twentieth century as a particular expression of a burgeoning sense of social responsibility in the church, and the term came to cover a wide variety of organizations and activities. With the development of Catholic Action, the role of the church is seen as *above* that of the secular society, the church's permanent interests as located *beyond* mere temporal power. The collaboration of laypeople was still needed though to run charitable enterprises and to effect various social programs. Pius XI defined the purpose of Catholic Action within a broader vision of the church as "the participation of the laity in the apostolate of the hierarchy" [Pope Pius XI, letter to Cardinal Bertram, Nov. 13, 1928, in *The Lay Apostolate: Papal Teachings*, ed. Benedictine Monks of Solesmes (Boston: St Paul Editions, 1961), 289]. An article from this same era describes the relationship in more scholastic terms: "Laymen [*sic*] are the instrumental cause of the apostolate in Catholic Action; the hierarchy is the principal cause" [R. G. Bandas, "Catholic Action," *The Ecclesiastical Review*, 88 (June, 1933), 572]. With *Azione Cattolica* Pius was able to have his apolitical cake and eat it too: the church could still relate to the political world but would now be involved in worldly affairs only in an indirect manner, with the laity serving as the instrument of clerical will within the temporal realm. As has been seen in the sections of the documents reviewed here relating to the role of priests, this division of labor and purpose between clergy and laity was still current in the Latin American ecclesiology of the CELAM meetings. To understand how Catholic Action contributed to ongoing oppression in Latin America, see William T. Cavanaugh's penetrating book, *Torture and Eucharist: Theology, Politics, and the Body of Christ* (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, Inc., 1998).

[60]The Second Vatican Council, while still holding on to a hierarchical notion of the church with distinct functions pertaining to its various constituent groups, envisions a more seamless relationship among its members: "Everything that has been said of the People of God is addressed equally to laity, religious and clergy" (*Lumen gentium* §30, 388).

the world as the Church's vanguard, in order to remodel social, economic, and political structures in accordance with God's plan."[61]

This viewpoint that the clergy should be disconnected from any direct action in changing the dynamics by which the poor are kept impoverished,[62] is contradicted, though, at other points in the magisterial teaching emanating from Latin America. Sometimes the CELAM bishops call for the church to be highly *engagé*. A first step to that end involves the task of promoting increased cognizance of the actual situation of poverty around them: religious are called to "develop an awareness of the grave social problems of vast sectors of the people among whom we live,"[63] and priests are admonished to remember that "today it is required that the priest be able habitually to interpret life situations and community demands in the light of the faith . . . [since] Latin American pastoral care is committed to the promotion of human betterment in order that each man [*sic*] reach self-realization and enjoy the goods of nature."[64] From that point, the members of the Latin American episcopate then recommend that clergy "be present in life and in secular works, reflecting

---

[61]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 55.

[62]The contention of separate roles for clergy and laity is, however, diametrically opposite the one promoted by Paul Gauthier and espoused by one of the great sources for the church's refocus on poverty at the Second Vatican Council, the "church of the poor group." Recall that Paul Gauthier was himself inspired by the worker-priest movement in France, which was ultimately banned by Pope Pius XII, and that it was he who founded *La Fraternité des Compagnons de Jésus Charpentier* (*The Brotherhood of the Companions of Jesus the Carpenter*) in Palestine in 1958, a cooperative movement based on the ethic of both priest and lay persons living amongst the poor and working directly with their hands on their behalf.

[63]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 191.

[64]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 203, 204.

the light of Christ, present in the construction of the world," giving as an example of direct action, "when one organizes power and wealth for the benefit of the community."[65] Clearly the bishops are calling for some kind of active engagement on the part of the hierarchical church and envisage their role as more than just urging others to become involved. Those social organizations that are already in place within parishes and dioceses must be changed over from operating as dispensers of charity to becoming organs for integral development: the bishops write that the church will no longer "be solely a welfare institution, but rather will *become operational* in the developmental process of Latin America, as an institution authentically dedicated to its growth,"[66] a remarkably strong statement of active solidarity with the poor.

Such bold declarations, it should be noted, belong to the "voice of Medellín" a burst of creative energy occurring at the 1968 convocation of Latin American bishops that broke through the complacency of the times to challenge both the bourgeois elites and the members of the church hierarchy itself. That strong voice, however, became tempered with time to some extent, and at Puebla, and certainly with Pope John Paul II, such calls for direct ecclesial participation in the economic restructuring of society are more muted. Later magisterial documents frequently return to exhortation of moral action as the sole role for the clergy and religious in the hierarchical church. It is in these later texts that the preaching of the gospel is most often juxtaposed with the reality of arrant structural inequities by frequently pairing the words "annunciation" and "denunciation," sometimes phrased as

---

[65]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 219.

[66]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 67.

"faithful proclamation and prophetic denunciation."[67] For example, the bishops of the Third General Conference "demand for the Church the right to bear witness to its message and to use its prophetic word of annunciation and denunciation in an evangelical sense, i.e., to correct false images of society that are incompatible with the Christian vision."[68] Accusing and condemning are obligations on the part of the church as a result of its unique understanding of the human condition: "The Church, the expert in humanity . . . faced with the situation of sin . . . has a duty to engage in denunciation . . . [which] must be objective, courageous, and evangelical."[69]

This call to rectify social sin chiefly through inspiration and critique (annunciation and denunciation) is connected many times to the promotion of an internalization of the church's social teaching by the "constructors of society": the bishops at Puebla hope that by building "a bridge of contact and dialogue with the builders of temporal society, in order to enlighten them with the Christian vision," and by listening to their concerns, they can create an "elaboration of a social ethics capable of formulating Christian answers to the major problems of contemporary culture."[70] In some instances, the principles of Catholic social teaching, combined with a "corrected" understanding of human beings as all created equal

---

[67]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 85.

[68]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 187. As was mentioned earlier, it is to their credit that the bishops focus on the false ideologies which legitimate and sustain social sin understanding that it is these "false images" and faithless values that contribute so to structural inequalities.

[69]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 194.

[70]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 188-89.

by God, are put forth as adequate to change the hearts and actions of not only the

recalcitrant rich, but whole nations as well. At the end of their long document produced at

Puebla, the CELAM III bishops envision a properly catechized family of nations wherein

"economic surpluses, the savings from disarmament, and all other wealth on which there is a

'social mortgage,' even on the international level, will have to be utilized for social

purposes";[71] even more, a kind of *pax christiana* to go along with this new world order is

advanced as Christian values permeate the dealings of nations: "The Church must also

engage in active service . . . [and] should create an ethical conscience with regard to the

major international problems."[72] The path to achieve these lofty ends is spelled out in Part

Five of *Evangelization at Present and in the Future of Latin America* and reveals Puebla's

grand hope for moral reform achievable through reformation of conscience:

> . . . denouncing situations of sin; summoning people to conversion; and committing believers to world-transforming action. . . . We must create in the people of Latin America a sound moral conscience, a critical-minded evangelical sense [consciousness] vis-à-vis reality, a communitarian spirit, and a social commitment. All that will allow for . . . the construction of a new society that is truly human and suffused with evangelical values."[73]

The grand leap from the embracing of Catholic social teaching to reformation of the

conscience of the whole world is also to be found in the magisterial writings of Pope John

Paul II. Like the CELAM bishops before him, the pontiff believes that the "teaching and

spreading of her [the church's] social doctrine are part of the Church's evangelizing

---

[71]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 195.

[72]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 195.

[73]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 198-99.

mission. And since it is a doctrine aimed at guiding *people's behavior*, it consequently

gives rise to a 'commitment to justice,' according to each individual's role, vocation and

circumstances."[74] Although John Paul II dubs the social teaching of the church "an

indispensable and ideal orientation,"[75] the exact mechanism by which it becomes

transformative for the individual Christian ("gives rise to a 'commitment to justice'")—and

most importantly, how it actually becomes translated into new, concrete actions on behalf of

the oppressed (capable of "guiding *people's behavior*")—is not articulated by the pope. In

other words, the role of the church's social doctrine in effecting conversion is taken as

axiomatic; as a result, there is little elaboration apparently needed or given on how the

process might actually work.

Additionally, Pope John Paul II's reliance on phrases like "the *condemnation* of evils

and injustices" and "the Church's *prophetic role* . . . [of] *proclamation*" (in *On Social*

Concern §41) is highly reminiscent of the Latin American bishops' credence in the

transmutative powers of "annunciation" and "denunciation," and suggests a faith in

humanity which has not been seriously—and unaccountably so—jaundiced by "the mystery

of sin."[76] In fact, the struggle inherent in overcoming sin is not mentioned by the pope in his

analysis of social sin at all, and its absence seems a particular lacuna in his moralizing. Nor

does the pontiff place onto the commission of social sin the same penalties, such as the loss

---

[74]Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, §41, 425.

[75]Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus annus*, §43, 471.

[76]John Paul II writes that the enlightened "whole man" is one who "displays his capacity for self-control, personal sacrifice, solidarity and readiness to promote the common good"; Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, §51, 477.

of grace, as would be the case with personal sin. Instead, John Paul II believes that in

naming economic injustice as sinful and "a *moral evil*," he is somehow advancing the

understanding of how to vanquish social sin: "To diagnose the evil in this way is to identify

precisely, on the level of human conduct, *the path to be followed* in order *to overcome it*."[77]

"The Church, the expert in humanity,"[78] seems, at least in this instance, bereft of the insights

afforded by modern human psychology to help make the move realistically from exhortation

to action.

The lines of demarcation between personal initiative and communal responsibility as

regards remedying the ills of social sin, in other words, how the individual agent relates

morally to the larger society, are permeable in the magisterial documents selected for

analysis. On the one hand, the texts speak to one community of Christians which shares

---

[77]Ibid., §37, 420. The pontiff's effort to "diagnose the evil" here is not engagement in the sociological analysis of social sin as a necessary first-step in addressing its rectification, but a matter of ethics: John Paul II believes that the perpetuation of social sin results from our not understanding it as "a *moral evil*"; once humanity is brought to that realization, the pope believes, the personal decisions and collective actions needed to overcome it will automatically follow.

[78]As mentioned earlier, this is the phrase used by the Latin American bishops at the Third General Conference (footnoted no. 69 above). Of interest here, though, is to make a comparison between Pope John Paul II's teaching on the limits of hierarchical wisdom in solving social problems and a similar one expounded by the Fathers at the Second Vatican Council. The pontiff writes in *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (§41, 425): "The Church's social doctrine is . . . the accurate formulation of the results of a careful reflection on the complex realities of human existence, in society and in the international order, in the light of faith and of the Church's tradition. Its main aim is to interpret these realities, determining their conformity with or divergence from the lines of the Gospel teaching on man [*sic*] and his vocation, a vocation which is at once earthly and transcendent." A more modestly nuanced point of view is suggested in the Vatican II bishops' instruction: "Let them [the laity] realize that their pastors will not always be so expert as to have a ready answer to every problem (even every grave problem) that arises; . . . it is rather up to the laymen [*sic*] to shoulder their responsibilities under the guidance of Christian wisdom"; *Gaudium et spes*, §43, 944.

---

among its members a common set of values and a single goal, that of spreading "the good news"; this "one church" actually meets the criterion for a plural subject as discussed in chapter two. On the other hand, though, this People of God is understood to be composed of individuals who singly bear the obligation of a personal commitment to fight economic injustice and other forms of oppression.[79] Yet, any large-scale social transformation is possible only through the concerted effort of many; it is not achievable by the lone Christian, no matter how motivated by God's grace or love of neighbor. Pope John Paul II sees this complexity of the problem clearly when he writes:

> The obligation to commit oneself to the development of peoples is not just an *individual* duty, and still less an *individualistic* one, as if it were possible to achieve this development through the isolated efforts of each individual. It is an imperative which obliges *each and every* man and woman, as well as societies and nations. In particular, it obliges the Catholic Church and the other churches and ecclesial communities, with which we are completely willing to collaborate in this field.[80]

This idea, that it is necessary for committed Christians to work collaboratively—particularly in the case of attempting to overcome social sin, is found throughout the teaching of the magisteria: the CELAM III bishops note that faithful laity must face their "common responsibility, in the face of a challenge that requires the participation of all,"[81] and Pope John Paul II talks about "a duty of *all towards all*."[82] More than just solidarity with the

---

[79] John Paul II certainly views the causal agents of underdevelopment individualistically; he identifies "the *moral causes*" for social sin as resulting from "the behavior of *individuals* considered as *responsible persons*"; Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, §35, 419.

[80] Ibid., §32, 416.

[81] CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 188.

[82] Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, §32, 416.

poor, the pontiff calls for communal action on their behalf: "Just as there is a collective responsibility for avoiding war, so too there is a collective responsibility for promoting development."[83] While John Paul II does not spell out which steps are to be taken by which individuals in order to contribute to common cause in relieving the burdens of the poor, he is certainly calling for a collectivistic moral effort on some level. Both person and community must work to overcome social sin, the magisteria teach; the ways in which the individual relates to and operates in accord with the group, though, are not explained in the documents.[84]

Lastly, the degree to which these laudable aims to rectify social sin are achievable within and by an institutional church allied to and part of the economic structure of the surrounding society is a subject of critique. The bishops at Medellín sent forth a call "that the Church in Latin America should be manifested, in an increasingly clear manner, as truly poor, missionary and paschal, separate from all temporal power and courageously committed to the liberation of each and every man [*sic*]."[85] In his encyclical *Sollicitudo rei*

---

[83]Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus annus*, §52, 478.

[84]John Paul II, subject to the oppression of communism during his clerical life as priest, bishop and cardinal, was overall highly suspicious of collective action, a concept associated with Marxism. In fact, one of the reasons for his insistence on the moral agent acting singly as being at the root of all sinning may have resulted from a fear on his part that to imply anything else would feed into a "collectivist" mentality that he so patently abhorred. Note his warning about "the watering down and almost the abolition of personal sin" in *Reconciliation and Penance*: "According to this usage, which can readily be seen to derive from non-Christian ideologies and systems . . . practically every sin is a social sin, in the sense that blame for it is to be placed not so much on the moral conscience of an individual, but rather on some vague entity or anonymous collectivity such as the situation, the system, society, structures or institutions"; *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, §16, 38-39.

[85]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 114.

socialis, Pope John Paul II also calls for the church to be a poor church: "Faced by cases of need, one cannot ignore them in favor of superfluous church ornaments and costly furnishings for divine worship; on the contrary it could be obligatory to sell these goods in order to provide food, drink, clothing and shelter for those who lack these things . . . here we are shown a 'hierarchy of values.'"[86] Later, on the one-hundredth anniversary of *Rerum novarum*, the pontiff calls for a giving up of privilege by all: "an effort which also involves sacrificing the positions of income and of power enjoyed by the more developed economies. This may mean making important changes in established life-styles."[87] The issue of the church's role in being in solidarity with the poor—for both the hierarchy and the laity—will be explored in greater depth in the next synthesis of documents, this one related to Question Four.

Question Four: "What does each source's analysis of the particular issue of poverty reveal about moral agency in relation to social sin?"

With the exception of Pope John Paul II's intriguing innovation to consider "the sins committed against the Church's unity" (*Ut unum sint*, §34, 44) as structures of social sin,[88]

---

[86]Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, §31, 416. However, as was mentioned above, in the eyes of some critics the splendor of the Vatican belies this sentiment.

[87]Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus annus*, §52, 479.

[88]"Not only personal sins must be forgiven and left behind, but also social sins, which is to say the sinful [ecclesial] 'structures' themselves which have contributed and can still contribute to division and to the reinforcing of division [i.e., the disunity within the church of Christ]" Pope John Paul II, *Ut unum sint* ("That They May Be One"), §34, 44.

the term *social sin* is used so frequently in relation to economic injustice and its attendant consequences of oppression, marginalization, and suffering, as to render it practically synonymous with poverty itself. Thus, the subject of how to respond to "the cry of the poor" (Prv 21:13), especially in terms of substantive structural change designed to alter radically the existential situation of the impoverished multitudes, became a major issue in magisterial teaching after the Second Vatican Council. And part of that discussion involved a more basic question: whether it was necessary for the church to be a "poor church" (*una Iglesia pobre*) in order to herald effectively the gospel message of love of neighbor. Also subject to inquiry was exactly how, if necessary, such poverty was to be achieved in the context of a countervailing reality, namely that of a church existing (and for a long time) as a social institution well embedded in the culture it was meant to evangelize.

In the Latin America of the mid-twentieth century, the situation was complicated even further by the fact that the church itself was criticized in many quarters for being not just part of the social structure enmeshing the poor, but actually one of the perpetrators of their oppression, specifically in operating as an accomplice of the rich landowners and other elites who ran the society.[89] It was to answer this unfavorable judgment that the bishops meeting at Medellín took pains to demonstrate their solidarity with the poor: "The Church

---

[89]In a subsection of his Position Paper entitled (somewhat ironically), "Testimony of Poverty," Ecuadorean Cardinal Pablo Muñoz Vega "admits" the reality of this economic collusion when he justifies calling for more generous contributions from the laity with the argument that it would relieve the church from the regrettable current state of ecclesial entanglement in the financial structures of the society: "Our best procedure would be to educate our people to give, so that by their contributions the Church and its works would be supported. She would then be able to abolish the situation which now forces her to live on investment profits that create the current image of a wealthy Church," CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 1*, Position Papers*, 254.

of Latin America today feels called to give a particular witness of poverty . . . she therefore experiences the need of seeing herself free from temporal ties that commit her, detached from unnecessary material goods that paralyze her."[90] Cardinal Muñoz Vega, in explaining the alienation of some from the Catholic church, spells out the dimensions of the problem: looking around, he finds "a bureaucratic Church, a Church whose great buildings imply wealth and power, a Church linked to the secularized structures of a society governed by an oligarchy, of a paralyzed Church."[91] To counter this impression, the Cardinal from Quito urges greater "evangelical poverty"[92] and an "evangelical simplicity" in lifestyle in order for the church "to become, in the contemporary world, efficient apostolic structures, winning hearts to the faith and the charity of Christ."[93] According to the episcopate meeting in Medellín, then, the first step in alleviating the poverty around them was for the members of the church, most especially the hierarchy, to live in solidarity with the poor in a more fundamental manner.[94]

The teaching of the Latin American bishops here is that the church properly "is herself bound to material poverty"; in fact, they go on, "All members of the Church are

---

[90]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 1*, Position Papers*, 120.

[91]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 1*, Position Papers*, 246.

[92]In the second volume of documents produced at the Second General Conference, *Conclusions*, the Latin American bishops recognize "evangelical poverty" as being "one of the indispensable characteristics of priestly spirituality"; CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 182.

[93]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 1*, Position Papers*, 254.

[94]"The poverty of the Church and of its members in Latin America ought to be a sign and a commitment . . . an obligation of solidarity with those who suffer"; CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 216.

called to live in evangelical poverty."[95] The argument they make is that the members of the

hierarchy should model for all the laity a witness to poverty, and out of that inspiring

example will come a transformative change of heart in all which will then bear fruit in

justice:

> The Latin American Church, given the continent's conditions of poverty and underdevelopment, experiences the urgency of translating that spirit of poverty into actions, attitudes and norms that make it a more lucid and authentic sign of its Lord. . .
>
> The present situation, then, demands from bishops, priests, religious and laymen the spirit of poverty which, "breaking the bonds of the egotistical possession of temporal goods, stimulates the Christian to order organically [reconfigure] the power and the finances in favor of the common good."[96]

Since laypersons are catalogued among those from whom is demanded "the spirit of

poverty," the bishops fully expect their example to inspire others to renounce wealth too. A

salient question remaining here, however, is: when the clerical example does *not* lead to

essential changes in patterns of behavior on the part of the laity, is the failure to inspire the

fault of the exemplars in not truly adopting evangelical poverty, or that of the imitators in

refusing to follow their models?

---

[95]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 215.

[96]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 215-16. The quotation used by the bishops here comes from Pope Paul VI's *Homily of the Mass on Development Day*, given in Bogotá, Columbia on 23 August 1968. Egotism and selfishness are familiar targets used often by the CELAM bishops to critique the vices of the rich: "With their witness they [religious consecrated to a life of poverty] are an evangelical denunciation of those who serve money and power, who egotistically keep back for themselves the goods that God has given to humanity for the benefit of the whole community"; CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 138.

That issue is skirted to some degree eleven years later when the Latin American bishops meet at Puebla for the Third General Conference. The episcopal body there first notes progress within its own ranks in achieving that "evangelical simplicity" (*la sencillez evangélica*) that was called for by Cardinal Vega at Medellín: "At present we certainly do find greater simplicity and poverty in the bishop's lifestyle."[97] The laity, however, are not confirmed as having made sufficient progress in adopting "evangelical poverty" (*la pobreza evangélica*)—defined as "the giving and sharing of material and spiritual goods"[98]—not only a hallmark of the reign of the kingdom of God, but also the means to effect substantive change on behalf of the poor; lay people, rather, are criticized for still being too attached to the status quo: "The committed involvement of the laity in the temporal sphere, which is so necessary for structural change, has been very inadequate."[99] Exactly which sectors of the laity are to blame for this lack of involvement? The rich had been an object of episcopal opprobrium at Medellín and the trend continues at Puebla:

> Undoubtedly situations of injustice and acute poverty are an indictment in themselves, indicating that the faith was not strong enough to affect the criteria and the decisions of those responsible for ideological leadership and the organization of our people's socio-economic life together. . . . structures that have proven to be well-springs of injustice . . . arise out of the ideologies of the dominant cultures, and they are inconsistent with the faith that is part of our people's culture.[100]

---

[97]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 52.

[98]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 180.

[99]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 52.

[100]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 97, 98.

The problem is identified here as an infirm (or perhaps put more finely, an unfirm) "faith"; but, as has already been observed, making such a charge simply moves the problem one step further back: what is the cause of the people's insufficient faith in the first place—the weakness of evangelization or poor reception of the Gospel on account of the greed and self-interest already identified by the bishops—that they are not moved to work harder at ending poverty?

While the bishops look about to explain the lack of progress in helping the poor, they recognize the strength of the societal forces which counterbalance the preached message of the gospel, giving the love of money, in particular, a kind of attractive power similar to that ascribed to the golden calf by the idolatrous Hebrews (Ex 32): "Turned into an absolute, wealth is an obstacle to authentic freedom. The cruel contrast between luxurious wealth and extreme poverty . . . shows the great extent to which our nations are dominated by the idol of wealth."[101] But there is no further analysis made of how this idol operates, except by dint of human frailty, and no prescriptions offered on what practices among the faithful might prove fruitful in avoiding its powerful sway. The fallback position for the bishops is always the "mystery of sin," or as expressed in this section of the CELAM III documents, the fact that "sin corrupts humanity's use of power."[102]

The bishops end up here, as before, relying on internalization of a heightened sense of obligation in order to provide a counterbalance adequate to combat human concupiscence. At Medellín they wrote:

---

[101]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 107.

[102]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 107.

> We ought to sharpen the awareness of our duty of solidarity with the poor [which] has to be concretized in criticism of injustice and oppression, in the struggle against the intolerable situation which a poor person often has to tolerate, in the willingness to dialogue with the groups responsible for that situation in order to make them understand their obligations.[103]

And at Puebla, the bishops reason that "the attitude of the Christian should be that of a person who uses the goods of this world, whose makeup is transitory, without absolutizing them, since they are only means to reach the Kingdom."[104] They believe in cognitive processes such as *realization* as able to induce moral perceptions so powerful as to transform behavior and effect substantive change: "The significant economic progress that has been experienced by our continent proves that it would be possible to root out extreme poverty and improve our people's quality of life. If that is possible, it becomes an obligation."[105] But what if people do not do as they "ought"? The bishops do not connect what "should" be done as a requirement of moral responsibility directly to sinfulness and culpability in allowing the perpetuation of brutalizing poverty: whatever may be the "sin" in sinful structures—and for all the hand-wringing that the bishops express in regretting

---

[103]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 217. Right from the start of the Second General Conference, Bishop Eduardo Pironio, Secretary of CELAM, had presented combatting poverty in terms of moral duty: "It is evident that in the Latin American reality there is a 'situation of sin' that ought to be transformed into a reality of justice and sanctity. . . . All men [*sic*] and all peoples ought to feel collectively culpable, commit themselves to conquer the sin within, [and] fight for liberation from its consequences (hunger, misery, sickness, oppression, and ignorance)"; CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 1*, Position Papers*, 112. Pironio's use of the phrase "collectively culpable" (*solidariamente culpables*) is an interesting one and will be referenced again in the last chapter of this dissertation.

[104]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 180.

[105]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 41.

it—social sin carries no penalty, at least not in the same way that personal sin redounds to the individual.

The motivation to change is presented by the magisteria as related to a better understood, more appreciative reception of God's grace,[106] described at the Second General Conference as "*personal fidelity*, a joyful and total response to a divine call."[107] Such strong belief in an unimpeded flow to God's grace allows Pope John Paul II to frame the issues of poverty in terms of morality: with the social teaching of the church presented as rationale for behavioral improvement, the pontiff holds that an individual is bound to respond positively for the "application of the word of God to people's lives and the life of society [is] directed toward *moral conduct*."[108] He even finds problematic the separation of humankind into First World and Third World, as is commonly done in economic parlance, noting that such a compromise of the unity of the human race "undoubtedly conceals a *moral content*."[109] Without any spur for changing behavior apart from the appeal to a

---

[106]The bishops at Puebla hold the necessity of respecting the dignity owed each human being as a matter of equality before God whose grace extends to all: "It [the Church] also professes the belief that every attack on human dignity is simultaneously an attack on God himself, whose image the human being is. . . . We have a serious obligation to proclaim the dignity that properly belongs to all without distinction . . . [and to profess] that every human life deserves to be dignified in itself, in whatever circumstances; that all human life together must be grounded on the common good, which lies in the ever more fraternal realization of the common dignity of all"; CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 79, 81.

[107]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 1*, Position Papers*, 116.

[108]Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, §8, 398.

[109]Ibid., §14, 402.

generalized improved morality, John Paul II ends up counting on a reordered "hierarchy of values":

> What is called for is a special effort to mobilize resources, which are not lacking in the world as a whole, for the purpose of economic growth and common development, redefining the priorities and hierarchies of values on the basis of which economic and political choices are made.[110]

The bishop of Rome, like his Latin American counterparts before him, points out the new path to be taken, but does not provide any new motivation for adopting the reordered system of values. Instead, he ends up in the familiar position of decrying the reality of widespread poverty ("the ones who possess much are relatively *few* and those who possess almost nothing are *many*"),[111] and offering a more refined sense of moral obligation as the chief strategy for reigning in concupiscent human behavior: "Political leaders, and citizens of rich countries considered as individuals, especially if they are Christians, have the *moral obligation*, according to the degree of each one's responsibility, to *take into consideration*, in personal decisions and decisions of government, this relationship of universality, this interdependence which exists between their conduct and the poverty and underdevelopment of so many millions of people."[112] The adequacy of John Paul II continuing Pope Paul VI's

---

[110]Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus annus*, §28, 460. As was noted before, the appeal to a reformed "hierarchy of values" is an idea often expounded in the pope's teaching. In this encyclical, John Paul II employs the concept again in §29, 460 ("hierarchy of the true values of human existence") and in §47, 475 ("a balanced hierarchy of values"). The term is also found in *Sollicitudo rei socialis* in §28, 413; §31, 416; and §33, 417 ("true hierarchy of values").

[111]Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, §28, 413.

[112]Ibid., §9, 399. John Paul II's reliance on an ethics of duty is reflected in his frequent use of words like "should" and "ought." In *Sollicitudo rei socialis* alone the word "must" is used some forty-five times. Representative examples of the character of the

chief principle of argumentation—i.e., using moral suasion to motivate the faithful to work harder to alleviate poverty—is undercut by the fact that the overall economic situation of the worldwide poor was actually worse twenty years after *Populorum progressio* (whose anniversary *Sollicitudo rei socialis* was meant to commemorate), than was the case when Pope Paul VI promulgated his encyclical on the development of peoples.

One of the most lasting concepts to come out of the CELAM meetings was the Latin American bishops' call at Puebla for a preferential option for the poor. Use of the term in *Evangelization at Present and in the Future of Latin America* occurs late in the document and refers initially to the missionary work of living with poor and being in solidarity with them:

> Pastoral openness in one's labors and a preferential option for the poor represent the most noticeable tendency of religious life in Latin America. Indeed religious increasingly find themselves in difficult, marginalized areas; in missions to the indigenous peoples; and in silent, humble labors. This option does not imply exclusion of anyone, but it does imply a preference for the poor and a drawing closer to them."[113]

---

pontiff's thinking when he uses this rhetoric are given here: from §32, 416, "collaboration in the development of the whole person and of every human being is in fact a duty of *all towards all*, and must be shared by the four parts of the world: East and West, North and South; or, as we say today, by the different 'worlds'"; from §33, 418, "true development must be based on *love of God and neighbor*, and must help to promote the relationships between individuals and society"; from §39, 422, "interdependence must be transformed into solidarity, based upon the principle that the goods of creation are meant for all"; and from later in that same section (§39, also 422), "the stronger and richer nations must have a sense of moral *responsibility* for the other nations, so that a *real international system* may be established which will rest on the foundation of the *equality* of all peoples and on the necessary respect for their legitimate differences." Despite the frequent use of such urgent language, the question which remains unanswered is whether promoting a "duty of solidarity" (the term is famous from *Populorum progressio* §48) as a moral obligation actually obliges anyone.

[113]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 136.

Outreach to the poor in terms of solidarity is sanctioned, even extolled.[114] However, the bishops of the Third General Conference hew closely to Pope John Paul II's admonition given prior to the meeting at Puebla, "You are priests and religious; you are not social directors, political leaders, or functionaries of some temporal authority. So I repeat: Let us not entertain the delusion that we are serving the Gospel if we are trying to 'dilute' our charism through an exaggerated interest in the broad field of temporal problems."[115]

Magisterial circumscription of the idea of a preferential option for the poor became even more pronounced in the mid-1980s when the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith altered the phraseology to the more ethereal "love of preference for the poor" in their 1986 *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation* (*Libertatis conscientia*). To his credit, though, John Paul II brings the essential point home in his own writing of the following year. While still viewing the preferential option for the poor largely as a sort of abundant exercise of charity, he does expand the notion to operate as a kind of guide to decision-making for all Christians:

> . . . the *option* or *love of preference* for the poor. This is an option, or a *special form* of primacy in the exercise of Christian charity, to which the whole tradition of the Church bears witness. It affects the life of each Christian inasmuch as he or she seeks to imitate the life of Christ, but it applies equally to our *social responsibilities* and hence to our manner of living, and to the logical decisions to be made concerning the ownership and use of goods. . . . The motivating concern for the poor . . . must be

---

[114]The bishops at Puebla laud the exercise of a preferential option for the poor as able to set an example for the well-to-do: "The witness of a poor Church can evangelize the rich whose hearts are attached to wealth, thus converting, and freeing them from this bondage and their own egotism"; CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 181.

[115]Pope John Paul II, "Address to Priests," 27 January 1979, Basilica of Guadalupe, §8; quoted verbatim in CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 140 {CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 185}.

translated at all levels into concrete actions, until it decisively attains a series of necessary reforms.[116]

This potent idea of bringing the needs of the poor into each determination made in one's daily life is broached by John Paul II, but then quickly dropped from any further discussion. The pope might have enlarged upon the idea by operationalizing the ways in which a preferential option for the poor could indeed be exercised; instead, he simply ends up urging that "each local situation will show what reforms are most urgent and how they can be achieved."[117] While the nod to subsidiarity here is laudable on one level, abandoning discussion of the *actualization* of the proposed concept leaves the proposal hanging: a real opportunity to claim new ground for moral agency in relation to social sin by articulating how to apply the option to "our *social responsibilities*"—spurred along by use of the powerful teaching office of the pope and the prestige attending it—was surely lost.

Question Five: "What does each set of texts say about the role of personal and communal conversion in the matter of moral agency and social sin?"

The focus on poverty as an evangelical virtue and the call to exercise a preferential option for the poor, two arguments advanced above in the magisterial response to Question Four, though laudable as ideals, would seem ultimately ineffectual confronting the reality (inescapable to both bishop and pope) of persistent, abhorrent inequality and the scandalous division of peoples along economic lines. This fact was painfully acknowledged at Puebla

---

[116]Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, §42, 425 and §43, 426.

[117]Ibid., §43, 426.

when the bishops of Latin America wrote: "The Church sees a situation of social sinfulness [*sic*, the word used is *pecado*], all the more serious because it exists in countries that call themselves Catholic and are capable of changing the situation."[118] Obviously this conflict between what the gospel proclaims and how it is lived out by most Christians (in both attitude and behavior), requires some kind of substantive change in order to be resolved: in the Catholic tradition, that process is deemed conversion. It is to the topic of moral transformation that this chapter will now turn in considering Question Five.

One theme common to the selected documents is that any elevating of conscience and move toward conversion can be considered legitimate only when changes of heart are followed by concrete actions:[119] in the first Position Paper of Volume I of the documents published after Medellín, for example, Bishop Marcos McGrath writes, "The Church . . . has to denounce existing evil situations . . . But the word has to be followed by action."[120] More than a decade later, the bishops of CELAM III sound a similar note in closely tying the loving, i.e., converted, heart to active service on behalf of the poor (note the emphasis

---

[118] CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 42.

[119]"Our pastoral mission is essentially a service of encouraging and educating the conscience of believers, to help them to perceive the responsibilities of their faith in their personal life and in their social life"; CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 60.

[120]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 1*, Position Papers*, 104. Bishop Ruiz García seconds this notion, emphasizing as critical a living, active faith—more than mere assent to dogmas: "The faith of the convert is not reduced to following the dogmatic truths revealed and proposed by the Church, a kind of endorsement of the creed; it is a change of life, of mentality, an event which embraces all of his [*sic*] being, a personal encounter with Christ"; CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 1*, Position Papers*, 168.

laid on *structural* change—implying more than charity—and substantive social transformation):

> Authentic communion and participation can exist in this life only if they are projected on to the very concrete plan of temporal realities . . . in Latin America we cannot truly love our fellow human beings, and hence God, unless we commit ourselves on the personal level, and in many cases on the structural level as well, to serving and promoting the most dispossessed and downtrodden human groups and social classes, with all the consequences that will entail on the plane of temporal realities.[121]

Deeds are also required as proof of conversion in sacramental reconciliation with God. Pope John Paul II, in his encyclical review of Catholic theology pertaining to the sacrament of penance, writes that following confession and absolution, "Acts of satisfaction [one's penance] . . . are the sign of the personal commitment that the Christian has made to God in the sacrament to begin a new life (and therefore they should not be reduced to mere formulas to be recited, but should consist of acts of worship, charity, mercy or reparation)."[122] In other words, any move to conversion unaccompanied by concrete changes in behavior would be bereft of validation and, so, any lasting value. Magisterial teaching includes the conviction that conversion is also the only sure warrant of true and lasting positive social change.[123] Social reform in and by itself is not the real answer, since it can not be ensured to last absent an interior change in the people who constitute the society:

> The uniqueness of the Christian message does not so much consist in the affirmation of the necessity for structural change, as it does in the insistence on the conversion of

---

[121]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 83.

[122]Pope John Paul II, *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, §31, 82.

[123]"Evangelization seeks . . . to bring about a conversion that will serve as the basis and guarantee of a transformation in structures and the social milieu"; CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 91.

men [*sic*] which will in turn bring about this change. We will not have a new continent without new and reformed structures, but, above all, there will be no new continent without new men, who know how to be truly free and responsible according to the light of the Gospel.[124]

The tie between inner conversion and those external actions which support and verify the reality of change brings with it a new factor to consider, namely the ongoing relationship between these two phenomena. The magisteria teach that *metanoia* is not a once-and-for-all process, but rather a dynamic of interaction and mutual influence, the interior transformation reinforcing the exterior behavior and vice-versa. This point is clearly made when the Latin American bishops write:

> The required change in unjust social, political, and economic structures will not be authentic and complete if it is not accompanied by a change in our personal and collective outlook regarding the idea of a dignified, happy human life. This in turn, disposes us to undergo [further] conversion.[125]

As has been already observed, the sequence of events presented here is important: frequently the bishops hold that conversion is a *first* step in moral agency, one taken in response to the message of the gospel, or, as is often argued by Pope John Paul II, as a consequence of taking in the church's social teaching. In both cases the magisteria posit

---

[124]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 58. The bishops of the Second General Conference are reflecting here Pope Paul VI's judgment (from *Evangelii nuntiandi*, §36) that "even the best structures and the most idealized systems quickly become inhuman if human inclinations are not improved, if there is no conversion of heart and mind on the part of those who are living in those structures or controlling them." The bishops of the Third General Conference actually use this quote verbatim in §534 of their Final Document: CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 112.

[125]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 180. The use of the phrase "collective outlook" implies a social conversion in the People of God as a whole. While conversion of "the many" may be in fact what is needed here, the bishops generally do not venture beyond thinking of conversion in terms of isolated individuals rather than as plural subjects.

that a shift in cognition (or change of heart) occurs first, with new behavior, leading

ultimately to structural transformation, following after: "Before there is a [radical] change in

structures there must be a change in mentality, and better still than a change in mentality, a

change of heart, a profound continuing conversion of the whole man, a renovation of the

spirit."[126] John Paul II is explicit in his contention, regarding the sacrament of penance, that

"there can be no reconciliation unless these attitudes of conversion come first."[127] The point

is an important one in the pope's thinking because it relates to his understanding of the

social nature of personal sin. Confession of and contrition for wrong-doing are prerequisite

for the pontiff because they acknowledge the offense before the community (in the person

of the priest) which has been damaged by the sin: "This confession in a way forces sin out

of the secret of the heart and thus out of the area of pure individuality, emphasizing its

social character as well, for through the minister of penance it is the ecclesial community,

which has been wounded by sin, that welcomes anew the repentant and forgiven sinner."[128]

---

[126]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 1*, Position Papers*, 267. This statement made by Bishop Leonidas E. Proaño is supported by another confrère at Medellín, Bishop Samuel Ruiz García, who writes: "The evangelized man [*sic*] *is converted* first of all into a believer *who internally breaks away* completely from the material world and binds himself completely to God"; CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 1*, Position Papers*, 158.

[127]*Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, §26, 64.

[128]Ibid., §31, 81. Earlier in this same section the pontiff iterates his point with an affective argument: "We all do well to recall and emphasize the fact that contrition and conversion are even more a drawing near to the holiness of God, a rediscovery of one's true identity, which has been upset and disturbed by sin, a liberation in the very depth of self and thus a regaining of lost joy, the joy of being saved, which the majority of people in our time are no longer capable of experiencing"; ibid., §31, 80. This "joy of being saved" is advanced again as an appeal—along with the sequence of interior conversion coming first, reconciliation later—when the pope contemplates the jubilee celebration coming at the millennium: "The joy of every Jubilee is above all a joy based upon the forgiveness of sins,

A more nuanced stand is taken, however, when John Paul II considers the social sin

of Christian disunity. Here it is the community itself which bears the mark of sin—through

perpetration of evil acts by its individual members, to be sure—and so a communal sense of

contrition is at least partially espoused: quoting the Vatican-II Fathers' observation that

"there can be no ecumenism worthy of the name without interior conversion,"[129] the pope

notes that "the Council calls for personal conversion as well as for communal

conversion."[130] Presumably it is this conversion of the heart that will lead to Christian unity

in the end. A limited embrace of communal repentance and conversion, however, is

reflected in John Paul II's several cautionary remarks concerning use of the so-called "third

form" of penance allowed under the post-Vatican II revision of the sacrament, *Ordo*

Paenitentiae:

> The third form however—reconciliation of a number of penitents with general
> confession and absolution—is exceptional in character. It is therefore not left to free
> choice but is regulated by a special discipline. . . . The individual and integral
> confession of sins with individual absolution constitutes the only ordinary way in which
> the faithful who are conscious of serious sin are reconciled with God and with the
> church. From this confirmation of the church's teaching it is clear that every serious
> sin must always be stated, with its determining circumstances, in an individual
> confession. . . . The exceptional use of the third form of celebration must never lead to
> a lesser regard for, still less an abandonment of, the ordinary forms nor must it lead to
> this form being considered an alternative to the other two forms.[131]

---

the joy of conversion. . . . conversion ('metanoia'), which is the pre-condition for
reconciliation with God on the part of both individuals and communities"; *Tertio millennio*
adveniente, §32.

[129]Decree on Ecumenism (*Unitatis redintegratio*), §7, 460.

[130]Pope John Paul II, *Ut unum sint*, §15, 26.

[131]Pope John Paul II, *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, §32, 85; §33, 88; §33, 89.

So, on the one hand, while the pope can envision some need for a communal sense of wrong-doing, confession, contrition, and shift away or conversion from social sin—at least the social sin of Christian disunity[132]—on the other hand, the pontiff can not admit use of this sacramental third form of penance (except those extreme cases of *gravis necessitas*) as relevant in any other manifestations of social sin.

The Latin American bishops advance the notion that corporate conversion of the church as a whole will occur when the good example of the hierarchy inspires change. The social sin of economic injustice and rank inequality can be countered, they teach, only by a hierarchy willing to confess its past involvement and determined to convert from their collusion with the powers of society: "We cannot evangelize the poor if we [the hierarchy] are a power elite. The weak and oppressed will alienate themselves from Christ if we appear to be allied with the powerful."[133] This idea is carried forward when the bishops at Puebla write: "We realize that structural transformation is the outward expression of inner conversion. We know that this conversion begins with ourselves. Without the witness of a converted Church, our word as pastors would be futile."[134] The episcopal leaders even acknowledge their own failure to motivate the faithful through transformative liturgy; they

---

[132]"*Christian unity is possible*, provided that we are humbly conscious of having sinned against unity and are convinced of our need for conversion"; *Ut unum sint*, §34, 44.

[133]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 1, *Position Papers*, 172 (the term "power elite" is a translation of the word *latifundistas* in the Spanish text, a word which means more specifically "large landowners"). Cf. a similar statement from Puebla: "The Church must become more and more independent of the powers in this world"; CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 54.

[134]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 188.

note that often "participation in the liturgy does not have an adequate impact on the social commitment of Christians [and] sometimes the liturgy is used as a tool in ways that disfigure its evangelizing value."[135] In this understanding, conversion is something the People of God must do together, and the personal witness of the members of the hierarchy is critical to a successful change of heart in the entire assembly (ἐκκλησία) called forth by God.

This advance of the concept of witness as important in the process of conversion complements the emphasis on the primacy of individual conversion presented in John Paul II's writing. The Latin American bishops are more inclined, though, to see communal changes of heart following from personal witness as cardinal: "Authentic examples of detachment and freedom of spirit will make the other members of the People of God give a similar witness to poverty . . . a sincere conversion has to change the individualistic mentality into another one of social awareness and concern for the common good."[136] The move is from the person to the community which is inspired, back to the person who converts from an "individualistic mentality into another one of social awareness and concern for the common good." If changes in the ambient society are what transforms the individual, then perhaps moral responsibility should be taught with a focus more on communal change (e.g., enlightened social policies) as primary and less on conversion of the individual; the Latin American bishops certainly seem to making just this point when they write: "The Gospel must penetrate the values and criteria that inspire our culture, convert

---

[135]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 154.

[136]CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, 219.

the human beings who live by these values, and insofar as it is necessary, change the structures in which they live and express themselves so that they may be more fully human."[137] It is on this reasoning that the Latin American bishops construct a novel theory of social transformation, one which operates from the outside in, so to speak:

> The Church thus calls for a new conversion on the level of cultural values, so that the structures of societal life may then be imbued with the spirit of the Gospel. And while it calls for a revitalization of evangelical values, it simultaneously urges a rapid and thoroughgoing transformation of structures. For by their very nature these structures are supposed to exert a restraining influence on the evil that arises in the human heart and manifests itself socially; and they are also meant to serve as conditioning pedagogical factors for an interior conversion on the plane of values.[138]

The methodology for this process begins with the poor, hence the requirement of a preferential option for the poor. It is through the face-to-face contact with the oppressed and a giving over of the self to the gospel message of love for the marginalized that the person, and the church as a whole subsequently, becomes converted:

> Not all of us in the Latin American Church have committed ourselves sufficiently to the poor. We are not always concerned about them, or in solidarity with them. Service to them really calls for constant conversion and purification among all Christians. That must be done if we are to achieve fuller identification each day with the poor Christ and our own poor.[139]

It is, then, the Christian constantly converted by the poor who effects the structural change that moves the society away from its ingrained practices and sinful systems causing and perpetuating the oppression of social sin: "Commitment to the poor and oppressed and the rise of grassroots communities [base-level ecclesial communities] have helped the Church to

---

[137]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 92.

[138]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 98.

[139]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 178.

discover the evangelizing potential of the poor. For the poor challenge the Church

constantly, summoning it to conversion."[140] The bishops at Puebla are teaching here that

the example and witness of service to the poor is the effective cause of an interior change of

heart (thus the gift of the poor: their "evangelizing potential").

The difference in thinking between the CELAM bishops and Pope John Paul II on

this point is more than just one of nuance. The bishop of Rome tends to rely on rational

appeals to changing behavior (an individual's "determination") as a first step—hence the

value of the church's social teaching which explains the right course of moral action to

take—with conversion of heart following: "It is a firm and persevering determination to

commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual,

because we are all really responsible for all. This determination is based on the solid

conviction that what is hindering full development is that desire for profit and that thirst for

power already mentioned."[141] Patterns of behavior which underpin social sin are ripe for

cognitive restructuring through intellectual recommitment, John Paul II teaches. From a

shift in thinking, along with (presumably) the attendant sorrow of contrition for actions

considered in retrospect, comes the interior change necessary for eventual structural

transformation. In the end, the pontiff's appeal is to charity ("*love of preference* for the

poor") whereby "should" and "must"—almost against inclination—can overcome all human

weakness:

---

[140]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 179.

[141]Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, §38, 421.

> Those who are more influential, because they have a greater share of goods and common services, should feel *responsible* for the weaker and be ready to share with them all they possess. Those who are weaker, for their part, in the same spirit of *solidarity* . . . should do what they can for the good of all. The intermediate groups, in their turn, should not selfishly insist on their particular interests, but respect the interests of others.[142]

"*Love of preference* for the poor" reinforces a sequence of conversion which has rational reconstruction of an improved "hierarchy of values" coming first and actions following, whereas a preferential option (meaning "plan of action," remember) for the poor—sustained by conviction that to do otherwise is in fact sinful—requires action first, with a change of heart to come after.

The long-reigning Pope John Paul II came to embrace an acceptance of the idea of social sin, though he struggled to fit the concept onto traditional moral theory, particularly as regards the knotty problem of holding individual persons responsible for all sin. Perhaps this discomfiture explains why John Paul II appears awkward in trying to admit to the past sinful actions of the church—only able to do so by, in the same breath, separating the "Church" from the People of God who constitute it:

> . . . the Church should become more fully conscious of the sinfulness of her children, recalling all those times in history when they departed from the spirit of Christ and his Gospel and, instead of offering to the world the witness of a life inspired by the values of faith, indulged in ways of thinking and acting which were truly forms of counter-witness and scandal.

---

[142]Ibid., §39, 422. A bit further on, the pope repeats the essential point that "solidarity demands a readiness to accept the sacrifices necessary for the good of the whole community"; ibid., §45, 428.

Although she is holy because of her incorporation into Christ, the Church does not tire of doing penance: before God and man [*sic*] she always acknowledges as her own her sinful sons and daughters.[143]

And in the matter of sin, because "everything takes place between the individual alone and God,"[144] the emphasis in ameliorating social sin always redounds to the individual more than to the community. In the understanding of John Paul II, the person ultimately stands alone before God: "Each individual must recognize his [*sic*] own faults, confess his sins and place himself in the hands of the One who is our Intercessor before the Father, Jesus Christ. . . . only the act of placing ourselves before God can offer a solid basis for that conversion of individual Christians and for that constant reform of the Church"; thus, even in the quest for ecumenism, the pope ends up seemingly urging other Christian communities to move away from community and instead follow him and draw "into this completely interior spiritual space."[145]

This review of the how the selected documents did and did not answer the five heuristic questions which were posed has revealed some areas of agreement among the magisterial voices trying to accommodate moral agency to the "new" concept of social sin; but it has also uncovered divergent thinking, even contradictions. The "ruffled feathers" of analysis and synthesis may benefit from further reflection on where this investigation of the teaching of the magisterium over the past fifty years or so has left us—a project for which

---

[143]Pope John Paul II, *Tertio millennio adveniente*, §33.

[144]Pope John Paul II, *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, §31, 83.

[145]Pope John Paul II, *Ut unum sint*, §82, 91, 92.

non-magisterial thinking may actually prove helpful. It is to this settling task that the next

and final chapter of this dissertation will now move.

CHAPTER FIVE

REFLECTIONS ON THE SELECTED DOCUMENTS

Egoism can be opposed only by plurality, which is a frame of mind in which the self, instead of being enwrapped in itself as if it were the whole world, regards itself as a citizen of the world.

Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*

Introduction

Last chapter's synthesis of the documents selected for investigation in this dissertation proved difficult to some extent because of two factors: there was a certain inconsistency, or, to put it more charitably perhaps, a multiplicity of views presented within the teachings themselves, as well as some considerable divergence in magisterial thinking across the texts. Since neither bishops nor pope intended to write treatises specifically addressing the relationship of moral agency to social sin, the result on display of an irregular overlap is understandable. Nevertheless, as was noted above in analyzing the magisterial response to each of the heuristic questions, the lack of good fit bears some further scrutiny and reflection supported by insights from other thinkers who have pondered these issues; it is to that effort that this concluding chapter of the thesis now turns.

The framework of thinking about sin as existing in four modes that was presented in chapter one will provide the structure for this chapter; to review, these four ways of

considering sin are: (1) sin as transgression of law (*sin of commission*), (2) sin as failure to

uphold the love of God through inaction (*sin of omission*), (3) sin as a breach in divine and

human relationships (*sin of failing to love*), and (4) sin as rejection of God (*sin of refusing

God's grace*). If social sin is in any sense a true manifestation of sin that must be reckoned

with, it will have to fit into one or all of the modes listed above. Of course, these aspects of

sin are not *so* distinct as to have absolutely no bearing on or overlap with the others

mentioned in the formulated quartet. Additionally, these modes are simply invented

categories and heuristic devices by which we endeavor to understand the phenomenon of

human sinning. More to the point for this dissertation will be to consider how these modes

of sin which have been put forth interface with the issues of agency illuminated in the

analysis and synthesis of the selected texts of magisterial teaching. To assist in this

consideration and bring fresh perspectives to what bishops and pope have already claimed,

additional voices from outside the hierarchical magisterium of the church will be brought

into the discussion.

Four Modes of Sin

Sin as transgression of divine law may be the oldest (biblical) and most fundamental

interpretation given to the phenomenon of human error vis-à-vis the divine.[1] Specific

---

[1]"Any consideration of Christian morality and of the making of moral theology must acknowledge that the idea and the connotations of law are all-pervading and appear all but indispensable to the subject," John Mahoney, *The Making of Moral Theology: A Study of*

human actions which go counter to the will of God, such as Adam and Eve's eating of the fruit in the Garden of Eden contrary to the divine injunction, "from that tree you shall not eat" (Gn 2:17), appear to us as straightforwardly sinful. And indeed from the Ten Commandments on, religious fidelity has been largely construed in terms of adherence to the pronouncements of God, which in the Catholic tradition is mediated through the teaching authority of the church.[2] So-called *apodictic laws* (what "thou shalt" and "shalt not" do), absolute commands which derive from the religious sanctions of the Hebrews and are related to covenantal law, were carried forward into the Christian era and provided the rationale for the priestly use of the Penitentials in confession from the sixth century onward. Laws have a specificity of action to them which makes their violation easily apprehensible and ensuing judgments for their breach more readily quantifiable.

Such straightforward intelligibility, it might be assumed, would always be a characteristic of canon law. But Garrett J. Roche has found the situation to be more complicated in regard to those canons of the 1983 revision of the Code pertaining to the poor.[3] In addition to protections for the participation of the poor in the life of the church and guarantees for their free access to its ministries as a matter of entitlement, Roche also

---

the Roman Catholic Tradition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 224.

[2]Mahoney quotes a late medieval nominalist in this regard: "All justness and rightness of the rational creature consists in its conformity to the will of God. . . . Our justice consists in our will, which is weak and not right in itself, being conformed to the rule of the divine will, which is essentially right," ibid., 226.

[3]In this section I am indebted to Garrett J. Roche's article, "The Poor and the *Code of Canon Law*: Some Relevant Issues in Book II," *Studia Canonica* 30 (1996), 177-219.

finds positive promotion of the welfare of the needy in the Code of Canon Law, singling out

for particular examination canon 222, which reads:

§1. The Christian faithful are obliged to assist with the needs of the Church so that the Church has what is necessary for divine worship, for apostolic works and works of charity and for the decent sustenance of ministers.

§2. They are also obliged to promote social justice and, mindful of the precept of the Lord, to assist the poor from their own resources.[4]

The use of the word "obliged" vis-à-vis the poor in relation to those practices considered

indispensable for the Christian faithful (the *christifideles* include both laity and clergy)[5] is

unequivocal: "Ethical action is demanded of the believer, not in an effort to save herself or

himself, but is demanded in response to the Good News of being saved in Christ."[6]

Parsing §2 in some detail, Roche makes several observations regarding the meaning

of the language used in the canon and its relation to moral agency on the part of "all

Christ's faithful." First among these considerations is the use of the term "social justice," an

---

[4]Available from Vatican: the Holy See [Official Web Site of the Holy See], http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/_PU.HTM. Which "precept of the Lord" is being referred to here is not absolutely clear; some commentators think that the ambiguity in the canon is intentional so as not to be able to fix the duty of assisting the poor on just one of Jesus' teachings.

[5]Roche points out that c. 222 is incorporated in the Code in a chapter entitled, "The Obligations and Rights of All Christ's Faithful"; therefore, all the baptized are obliged under its provisions.

[6] Roche, "The Poor and the *Code of Canon Law*," 190. The same notion of justice to the poor as a requirement in fulfilling God's *torah* is a truth belonging to the Hebrew testament as well; cf. Jeremiah's rebuke to Jehoiakim: "Your father [Josiah] . . . did what was right and just, and it went well with him. Because he dispensed justice to the weak and the poor, it went well with him. Is this not true knowledge of me? says the LORD" (Jer 22:15b-16).

innovation of the 1983 Code—though the dignity owed the individual and the universal destination of earthly goods have long been part of the church's social teaching in terms of providing a ground for the promotion of economic justice. Adherence to the canon law in this instance does not involve a specific set of activities to be done, or particular strictures to be observed (as would be the case in canons relating to the proper reception of eucharist, for example), but an open-ended universe of possibilities for moral action all relating to the dictum "to promote."[7] The willing and effective participation of the *christifideles* in this regard is assumed; the limits to their creativity in fulfilling the law here is neither spelled out—nor bounded—by what is written in the canon.

The obligation to promote social justice on the part of the Christian faithful is amplified by the requirement "to assist the poor from their own resources." Again, although the language here is terse, the implications of the text are several. Roche points out that Vatican II documents used in the preparation of the 1983 revision of the Code are relevant here for a proper interpretation of the canon. Pertinent, for example, is the distinction between charity and justice made in the "Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People" (also cited by the Latin American bishops of the Third General Conference meeting in Puebla), particularly the pride of place to be accorded social justice.[8] With that text in

---

[7]"The use of the word 'promote' implies the responsibility to take the initiative in social issues, if need be," ibid, 196.

[8]"The demands of justice must first of all be satisfied; that which is already due in justice is not to be offered as a gift of charity. The causes of evils, and not merely their effects, ought to disappear. The aid contributed should be organized in such a way that beneficiaries are gradually freed from their dependence on others and become self-supporting," *Apostolicam actuositatem*, §8, 776.

mind, it is reasonable to conclude that while charitable giving is obligated under §1 of c. 222, the promotion of social justice by ensuring the self-sufficiency of the poor—a distinct activity—is obligated under §2 of c. 222. The conciliar texts also provide useful guidelines for interpretation of the limits of one's resources to be used in assisting the poor: a text from the "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World," which was a source for the revisors of the Code, notes that "every man [*sic*] has the right to possess a sufficient amount of the earth's goods for himself and his family. This has been the opinion of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, who taught that men are bound to come to the aid of the poor and so not merely out of their superfluous goods."[9]

Of course, putting forth obligation as a motivation for action does not guarantee compliance of the part of those who are nonetheless thereby enjoined. Advancing an ethics of duty to ensure social justice, a common technique of both the CELAM bishops and the bishop of Rome, has proven to be only partially effective in combating social sin. The Latin American bishops, of course, were incorporating this notion into their texts before the revision of the Code of Canon Law in 1983; John Paul II, however, wrote after. Roche reports that "from April to December of 1982, with the help of a group of canonists, the Pope [viz., John Paul II] personally studied the proposed Code [and] it was at this last stage of the drafting process that what is now c. 222, §2, was inserted and thus made its

---

[9]*Gaudium et spes*, §69, 975. Importantly, what constitutes a person's surplus of goods is not to be decided by the well-off by an estimation of what is "left over," but rather, as the Fathers of the Council point out (quoting here Pope John XXIII's *Radio message* [11 September 1962]), "To calculate what is superfluous by the measure of the needs of others"; ibid.

appearance in the promulgated Code."[10] With pontifical approval (if not direct input) of the wording of the canon apparent, it seems strange that—in all of the selected papal texts analyzed above and with all of their argumentation on the nature and limits of personal and social sin—Pope John Paul II never makes reference to canon 222 in any of his writings, although other canons are occasionally referenced. In other words, the opportunity of tying the failure to meet the obligation of promoting social justice, a breach of canon law according to c. 222, to *sin of commission*, a transgression of the law, is never taken. Could not church law be used to amplify moral exhortation?

Although canon laws prescribe in detail many of the obligations that the faithful must assume as members of the church, the provisions of c. 222 are different: they are *prosocial*, that is, they address empathetic behavior that is not easily decreed in terms of specifics. Acting in ways that benefit others and treating them as truly equal before God (promoting the common good, as it is often framed by the magisteria) may be laudable indeed, but does its opposite—the failure to incorporate the love of God into our attitudes and actions in the world—obtain as sin? This question is of prime importance when the evil of social sin is understood not as something we do, most often at least not consciously, but rather as the result of something that we do not do, almost surely unconsciously: otherwise called, *sin of omission*. It is reflection on this mode of sin that comes next.

Sins of omission present most commonly not as actions taken, but as inaction allowed to eventuate in the face of moral imperatives. Since what *not* to do is impossible to specify in its totality, any dereliction to act constituting moral failure derives ontically more

---

[10]Roche,"The Poor and the *Code of Canon Law*," 186.

from judgments of conscience than from edicts of law. The question of the degree to which

conscience is connected to the power of reason, which has an assured capacity to

understand universal principles of morality derived from natural law, or operates more as a

function of the will and therefore subject to natural appetites which draw us to or away

from doing the good, is at least as old a conundrum as the scholastic era of Thomas

Aquinas, some of whose perceptions of moral culpability were reviewed in chapter two.

Hannah Arendt, the twentieth-century ethicist (though she would likely object to the

appellation)[11] mentioned earlier in this dissertation, gave considerable thought to the

relationship between the intellect and conscience and was highly influential in the post-

World War II discussion of morality and guilt. Though Jewish by birth and culture,

Arendt's doctoral dissertation was on Augustine and his concept of love (*Der Liebesbegriff*

bei Augustin, 1929), and she very often incorporated tenets of Christian theology, along

with frequent quotations from the New Testament, into her writings. Of particular interest

here is her contention that moral behavior is dependent on thinking more than on

knowledge of the precepts of the law or religion.[12] Thinking—"an inner dialogue between

me and myself"[13]—is important because of its reflexive intimacy: our inner voice is also our

---

[11]"Arendt rejects the title of philosopher in favour of the title political theorist throughout her life," Fry, *Arendt: A Guide for the Perplexed*, 35.

[12]The strength of Arendt's insights lies in the fact that her declarations often force us to reconsider accepted ways of looking at things. That sin might be just the result of what Arendt calls "thoughtlessness" may come across as too nonchalant an observation: that "the problem of good and evil, our faculty for telling right from wrong, [might at bottom] be connected with our faculty of thought" seems either rudimentarily self-evident or strikingly naive—or both; Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind* (New York, NY: Harcourt, 1978), 5.

[13]Ibid., 188.

best friend, the "person" with whom we are inescapably beholden to live in peace.[14] Arendt

reasons that thinking serves the faculty of discernment precisely because it involves

consideration of the particular, a datum point of thought juxtaposed with others, instead of

a general norm or concept. One of her critiques of the "good Germans" who supported the

Nazis is that they were too subject to vague arguments, too prone to follow the lead of

others, and too unwilling to consider the specifics of what was actually happening around

them. A further point Arendt makes is that the action of thinking both remembers the past,

which is necessary for proper reflection on moral behavior, and imagines the future, and so

provides a basis for the critical incorporation of other persons' perspectives into our mental

schemes, a prerequisite for right judgment.

Conscience, etymologically a "knowing with," is that dialogue by and with ourselves

(thinking) which pertains to our judgments; knowledge of the world itself, on the other

hand, is cognition which forms the basis of our actions: what we will to do once we have

decided on the right course to take.[15] In this sense, Arendt is right in step with the

magisteria, who insist that moral judgments, and the sinful actions which may sometimes

---

[14]According to Arendt, a true friend in this world outside of the self would be someone who so intimately understands us and shares our values that the person operates as a true dialogical partner for our inner being; she observes, "[Aristotle] remarked: 'The friend is another self'—meaning: you can carry on the dialogue of thought with him [*sic*] just as well as with yourself," ibid, 189.

[15]Arendt observes that "[whereas] the will is supposed to move us into acting, and for this purpose we must emphatically be One . . . a mind divided within itself is more adequate for the task of deliberation"; Arendt, "Some Questions of Moral Philosophy," 122.

follow from them, are wholly and exclusively accountable to the individual.[16] What is

different in Arendt's ethical framework is the process, or better, the order of activities:

moral behaviors do not drift down from universal norms (divine laws, church

pronouncements) apprehended by the individual and then incorporated into action, but

instead rise up from individuals who contemplate the specifics of a situation in order to

decide what is the moral course of action to pursue. Additionally, the individual may be

held to be more fully responsible when moral accountability is related directly to decision-

making rather than explained by concupiscence or weak human will. It may seem

counterintuitive to claim that people can arrive at the right thing to do without someone,

particularly, the church, telling them *what* to do. But certainly millennia of humanity's

---

[16]An exception to this proposition, mentioned in chapter three (footnoted at no. 17), is advanced by Bishop Eduardo Pironio, Secretary General of CELAM, who was so scandalized by the *situación de pecado* in Latin America that he declared: "All men [*sic*] and all peoples ought to feel collectively culpable"; CELAM II [Medellín], *The Church*, Vol. 1*, Position Papers*, 112. {Todos los hombres y todos los pueblos deben sentirse solidariamente culpables"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia, I Ponencias*, 106.} Hannah Arendt, in contradistinction, eschews notions of collective guilt as meaningless in the context of human freedom and individual responsibility. She does, however, affirm collective responsibility, or what might be termed "collective accountability," a notion that even though we are not guilty of the wrongdoings of our forebears, we are held accountable for their actions in the sense that, as a members of an inherited society, we are beneficiaries of the merits of their deeds and misdeeds: "No moral, individual and personal, standards of conduct will ever be able to excuse us from collective responsibility. This vicarious responsibility for things we have not done, this taking upon ourselves the consequences for things we are entirely innocent of, is the price we pay for the fact that we live our lives not by ourselves but among our fellow men [*sic*] . . . and that the faculty of action . . . can be actualized only in . . . community"; Arendt, "Collective Responsibility," 157-58. Recall Dorothee Sölle's perceptive comment noted in chapter two (footnote no. 108): "I am also responsible for the house which I did not build, but in which I live." Lastly, Gustavo Gutiérrez acknowledges collectivity in terms of individual's collusion, arguing that sinful structures operate as products of corporate intention and common (if tacit) purpose: "Behind an unjust structure there is a responsible individual or collective will, a will to reject God and others," Gutiérrez, *The Truth Shall Make You Free*, 15.

acting quite against God's will seem to prove the point that "*knowing* a moral truth does

not keep anyone from *acting* against this knowledge."[17] Indeed, the streams of exhortations

to do the right thing which do come from the outside, a staple of magisterial parenesis, may

actually have little chance to penetrate the conscience which, at bottom, can only be

responsible in making peace with itself.[18] What Arendt does is place the locus of evil one

step anteriorly, as it were: not in a faulty conscience *per se*, but in the feeble processes of

thinking that go into its formation.

Not questioning norms and *no*t thinking through moral decisions is much more

common than might be at first supposed, argues Arendt. Greater sin, and for the sake of

argument here, social sin, results when people do not act thinkingly about how what they do

affects others, but instead operate out of habit or reflexively with an uncritical acceptance of

the ways of the world.[19] This not-thinking-things-through is why, in the end, evil is so

---

[17]Stephan Kampowski, *Arendt, Augustine, and the New Beginning: The Action Theory and Moral Thought of Hannah Arendt in the Light of Her Dissertation on St. Augustine* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 108.

[18]"The dialogue of thought can be carried out only among friends"; Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 189. Raskolnikov, the protagonist in *Crime and Punishment*, Feodor Dostoevsky's superb account of the harrowing "dialogue" of conscience within us, epitomizes Arendt's point here.

[19]"The total moral collapse of respectable society during the Hitler regime may teach us that under such circumstances those who cherish values and hold fast to moral norms and standards are not reliable . . . Much more reliable will be the doubters and skeptics, not because skepticism is good or doubting wholesome, but because they are used to examine things and make up their own minds. Best of all will be those who know only one thing for certain: that whatever else happens, as long as we live we shall have to live together with ourselves," Hannah Arendt, "Personal Responsibility Under Dictatorship," in *Responsibility and Judgment*, edited and with an introduction by Jerome Kahn (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 2003), 45.

banal: iniquity results not so much from consciously wicked actions done by malevolent people, but more often arises from the thoughtless inaction of people of good heart.[20]

Arendt has been criticized for being too critical of moral absolutes and for relying too much on the interiorization of moral standards absent a rigorous theory of virtue to support it.[21] Arendt's "thoughtlessness" as the basis for immoral behavior, though, does not come from an overweening credulity in cognitive processes themselves as leading necessarily to salvation, but rather, relates back to *culpable inattention*, a notion that Stephan Kampowski points out is derived from Thomas Aquinas.[22] In trying to explain how it was that some of the angels rebelled against the God who had created them good, Thomas uses the expression *absentia considerationis* (absence of consideration): the "bad angels" acted on their own, failing to consider fully, and acting independently from the will of God.[23] The crucial point here is that it is the failure to attend to important details which

---

[20]*Thoughtful* inaction, meaning purposed withdrawal from action—e.g., decisions such as refusing to abet the Nazi agenda or conscientious objection to fighting in war—can, of course, be morally responsible, and in extreme cases, it may be the only way to do good in certain situations: "[In Nazi Germany] the simple truth of the matter is that only those who withdrew from public life altogether, who refused political responsibility of any sort, could avoid becoming implicated in crimes, that is, could avoid legal and moral responsibility," ibid., 34.

[21]"While a person's practical principles may become truly interior, they may still be very wrong," Kampowski, *Arendt, Augustine, and the New Beginning*, 118.

[22]*Culpable inattention* is similar to *vincible ignorance*, another Thomistic notion, discussed in chapter two. Both concepts speak to the moral requirement of first obtaining sufficient knowledge to make informed moral decisions. Not looking for information or not paying attention to details which may bear on the rightness or wrongness of an action is in itself blameworthy. Put more simply, "ignorance of the law is no excuse."

[23]"In another way sin comes of free-will by choosing something good in itself, but not according to proper measure or rule . . . choice which is not properly regulated . . .

makes thinking defective and leads to poor judgment. The causes of such culpable

inattention may result from anything ranging from sloth to obstinacy;[24] what is relevant here

is the end result: information which could have been chosen and brought into consideration

was ignored.[25] So, sin as omission can occur at two points, so to speak: at the outset, in

failing to attend properly to what one ought in order to make a good decision, and also at

the end, in thoughtless processes of judgment[26] which can lead to inaction.

Such a sin does not presuppose ignorance, but merely *absence of consideration of the things that ought to be considered*," Summa Theologica, I, 63, 1, Reply Obj. 4; quoted in ibid., 89-90.

[24]"The fact that one cannot personally ascertain everything relevant to all one's moral decisions does not constitute an excuse from finding out as much as one reasonably can . . . A morally sound human life cannot dispense with faith in the assurances of others. But neither can it afford to make trustful docility a pretext for irresponsible laziness of mind," James Gaffney, *Newness of Life : A Modern Introduction to Catholic Ethics* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1979), 319.

[25]"It is rather a matter of not attending to a fact that is well-known and that could at any time be made present to one's mind if only one took the care to do so," Kampowski, *Arendt, Augustine, and the New Beginning*, 90. Kampowski goes on to quote (on p. 91) phenomenological observations of Robert Spaemann to further explicate the point: "Our naturalness, which is centered in and prejudiced toward ourselves, appears to us as the fundament out of which the point of view of reason arises like an emergence from sleep. . . . If the inattention were intentional, then it would not be inattention . . . Allowing attention to be lost is, however, a non-activity, a renunciation of that original activity, in which I allow reality to become real for me"; Robert Spaemann, *Happiness and Benevolence*, trans. Jeremiah Alberg (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 190-91.

[26]Cf. Lonergan, "Judging the Correctness of One's Interpretation," *Method in Theology*, 162-65. Moral conversion is constituted not as "new values so much as a transvaluation of values," a process which Bernard Lonergan argues can arise only as the result of an active exercise of the transcendental imperatives: being attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible—the conscious shunning of which through indifference may be considered sinful; Bernard Lonergan, "Theology in Its New Context," in *A Second Collection* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 66.

How, then, might the *christifideles* learn to think better about the parameters of sin as omission—and certainly formation of conscience is a cognitive process which must be worked at in order to be successful—so as to avoid culpable inattention? One way might be to use the third order of the Rite of Penance more extensively. Pope John Paul II, as has been observed, was very wary of recommending the use of general sacramental absolution: in the Apostolic Exhortation, "On Reconciliation and Penance In the Mission of the Church Today," he specifies that the "third form" of the Rite of Penance (*Ordo Paenitentiae*, 1973), general confession and absolution, "is exceptional in character,"[27] and only to be used in rare cases of *gravis necessitas*, such as danger of death for a multitude, as would be the case, for example, of soldiers going imminently into battle. But if Arendt is right about the necessity of *learning* to think, and if learning, particularly about the nature, extent and influence of social sin, can occur (and perhaps most penetratingly so) within an examination of conscience that is part of a sacramental rite of general absolution, then perhaps the third form may be of use in more than just emergencies; it might be of service in bringing to our attention new information about the reasons behind the plight of the poor and in leading us to new ways of thinking about how to ameliorate the situation. Recalling our careless ways of thought and our inattentive particular deeds, both individual and corporate, which have supported social sin is another possible beneficial outcome of broader use of general absolution.[28] Rather than relying on the affective discomfort engendered by the magisterial

---

[27] Pope John Paul II, *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, §32, 85.

[28] Remembering, Arendt points out, is a particular aspect of thinking which leads to moral knowledge: "We may say that repentance first of all consists in not forgetting what one did, in 'returning to it,' as the Hebrew verb *shuv* indicates. . . . No one can remember

denunciation of social sin and the appeal to feelings of obligation in trying to rectify it,

perhaps *thinking* about what is right and wrong in our social structures, *attending* in

common—as the People of God—to the complex details of their webs of entanglement

around us, may actually prove a better key to achieving the social conversion necessary "to

promote social justice."[29]

A third mode of sin which has been advanced as distinct (though interrelated with

the two previously mentioned) is to consider wrongdoing as a breach in divine and human

relationships (*sin of failing to love*). We know from a review of the Old Testament concept

of sin that relationality—the "I-Thou" dyad of a "pathetic" God who feels hurt by the "stiff-

necked" Hebrew people who so often disappoint in that relationship—was central to the

Jewish understanding of the divine. The contractual covenant between God and Israel was

but a more legalistic formulation of what was basically an affective association of two

(unequal) partners.

---

what he [*sic*] has not thought through in talking about it with himself," Arendt, "Some
Questions of Moral Philosophy," 94.

   [29]Gregory Baum laments, "What we long for is a penitential liturgy where we listen
to biblical texts that reveal our sins and the moral ambiguity of our existence and proclaim
God's unmerited goodness and mercy, where we repent as a community of our actions and
attitudes and our inaction and passivity, and we receive general absolution from the priest in
the name of Jesus Christ," Gregory Baum, "Why Catholics No Longer Go to Confession,"
Catholic New Times (Sep 7, 2003), 2; quoted in Gregory Baum, "The Preferential Option
for the Poor," in *Amazing Church: A Catholic Theologian Remembers a Half-Century of
Change* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005), 78.

Relationality, of course, is also the foundation of that most fundamental tenet of Christian theology, the Trinity.[30] The nature of the triune God, both *in se* and *ad extra*, constitutes a whole branch of theological speculation that has informed the entire history of the tradition. Most Catholics, though, if they consider the Trinity at all, know it only as an axiom of their faith—one unrelated, as it were, to themselves, especially in terms of sin. But sin as failure of the human relationship with the divine is perhaps a fruitful way to look at sin, even though it not advanced so often as a central tenet of Catholic hamartiology.

An exception to that tendency in theology would be Leonardo Boff, whose writing on the Trinity highlights the perfect communion of the three persons of the Trinity as a model, *the* model, for human society, and the failure to live in such trinitarian community as sinful. In *Trinity and Society*, Boff revives the Greek term *perichoresis* (περιχώρησις), the mutual indwelling, reciprocal presence, and interpenetration of the three divine persons, as the ideal prototype for the human community which ought to be based on the absolute equality and self-giving which marks the life of the triune godhead.[31] The loving union or

---

[30]"The doctrine of the Trinity *is* the Christian doctrine of God": Catherine Mowry LaCugna, "The Trinitarian Mystery of God," in *Systematic Theology*, Vol. I, ed. Francis Schüssler Fiorenza and John P. Galvin (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 154. The literature on the Trinity is vast. Two classic (though modern) treatments of the subject are: LaCugna's own *God For Us: The Trinity And Christian Life* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1991), and Karl Rahner's *The Trinity*, trans. Joseph Donceel (New York, NY: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1997).

[31]See: Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988). Elsewhere Boff explains: "The essential characteristic of each Person is to be *for* the others, *through* the others, *with* the others and *in* the others. They do not exist in themselves for themselves: the 'in themselves' *is* 'for the others.' The process of self-realization of the Trinity is made up of a dynamism of eternal communion, sharing the life of one with the

communion of the persons of the Trinity is paradigmatic because the human community is also made up of individuals who are different but equal; it is only our failing to love—our sinfulness—that perpetuates inequality. As the persons of the Trinity live for each other and give "without calculation" to one another, so too should our relations be within the community of humankind.[32] The standard here is high, of course, impossibly high, one might be tempted to say, except that divinization *is* the goal of a humanity, which, after all, has been fashioned in the image and likeness of God, and which to help in its transmutation, enjoys the gift of superabundant grace coming from God through the sacraments of the church.[33]

Human beings living in this world can best achieve the trinitarian life of dynamic communion, according to Boff, in an *orthopraxis* that is geared to the needs of the poor. Our participation in the divine life which comes through liturgy, in other words, is best sustained by our living out trinitarian relationship in community with our neighbor: "More important than knowing how the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one God is living the communion that is the essence of the Trinity."[34] In Boff's conceptualization, social sin as a

---

others, the interpenetration and coinherence of the three," Leonardo Boff, "Trinitarian Community and Social Liberation," *Cross Currents* 38:3 (Fall 1988), 292.

[32]Boff goes so far as to suggest that perfect self-giving is actually the rationale behind there being three persons in one God: "The persons are distinct not in order to be separated but to come together and to be able to give themselves to one another," Leonardo Boff, *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community*, trans. Phillip Berryman (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), 3.

[33]"For the effect of our sharing in the body and blood of Christ is to change us into what we receive"; Saint Leo the Great (*Sermo 12 de Passione* 7, in PL 54, 357).

[34]Boff, *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community*, 25.

sin against neighbor is evil not only in itself, but also because it violates the example of the trinitarian community of self-giving which is the source of our life: there is no distinction between sin as a breach of human relationship and sin as transgression in our life with God.[35] Liberation from sin and liberation from oppression and economic injustice become, then, essentially the same:[36] our life with the divine can be sustained only when our individual actions "to promote social justice" c. 222) corroborate the move from the self towards the other as modeled in the immanent life of the Trinity.

In Boff's understanding the perpetrator of sin, the individual as moral agent, and the sin itself are one: what we see and experience as the sin of the world is nothing less than the result of our own personal ruptures with God and the divine order intended for creation. It is not so much that "structures of sin" are "rooted in personal sin, and thus always linked to the *concrete acts* of individuals who introduce these structures, consolidate them and make them difficult to remove" (*Sollicitudo rei socialis*, §36) in the sense that they are *products* of human greed or other vices; social sin is rooted in personal sin because any deformation of love of neighbor is blasphemy of the communitarian (i.e., social) life of the Trinity. So,

---

[35]That failing to love others as God loves constitutes sin in the individual is a point driven home by Gustavo Gutiérrez: "Sin is regarded as a social, historical fact, the absence of fellowship and love in relationships among persons, the breach of friendship with God and with other persons, and, therefore, an interior, personal fracture," Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 102-3.

[36]Cf. the CDF's emphasis on defining liberation independent of the social context: "The most radical liberation . . . is liberation from sin and death . . . the first and fundamental meaning of liberation which thus manifests itself is the salvific one: man [*sic*] is freed from the radical bondage of evil and sin," Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Libertatis conscientia*, §22, §23.

the question must be asked: in terms of human action, how is this breach in our relationship with the divine, which is occasioned by sin against neighbor, best overcome?

Near the end of their Final Document, the Third General Conference of the Latin American bishops famously declared: "We affirm the need for conversion on the part of the whole Church to a preferential option for the poor, an option aimed at their integral liberation."[37] It was to overcome the rupture in human relationships generated by social sin that the episcopal magisterium directed its prescriptive rallying cry. The use of the word "preferential" is much-critiqued: that it sets up a hierarchy within the People of God that is anathema to the universal and equal love of Christ for all; the term, though, is actually a reference to the moral agent more than it is to the object of the preference, that is, the welfare of the poor.[38] The phrase acknowledges the reality of what Stephen Pope call *perspectivism*, "A recognition that social location profoundly influences our sensibilities, attitudes, priorities, [and] moral commitments."[39] As has been amply testified to in the magisterial denunciations of the rich and powerful, the culture and the position we inhabit within it can skew our ability to transcend our own personal perspectives to see and deal

[37]CELAM III [Puebla], *Evangelization: Conclusions*, 178.

[38]That God's preference is for the care of the needy—not for the poor *per se*, but still always mindful their special situation and needs—is testified throughout both the Old and New Testaments, epitomized best, perhaps, by the Parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus' answer to the "scholar of the law" who asks him, "And who is my neighbor?"(Lk 10:29b).

[39]Stephen Pope, "Proper and Improper Partiality and the Preferential Option for the Poor," *Theological Studies* 54:2 (Jun 1993), 247. He goes on to observe: "If apolitical neutrality tacitly supports the beneficiaries of prevailing social arrangements, a 'politicized' loyalty strives to support the poor and to understand the social order (or disorder) from their point of view"; ibid, 247-48.

with social sin. If Gregory Baum is correct that "false consciousness" distorts the "collective decisions . . . which increase the injustices in society and intensify the power of the dehumanizing trends,"[40] then he may also be right in arguing that "when confronted by a conflict between rich and poor (or powerful and powerless, or masters and slaves), then the Gospel demands . . . that [one] side with the oppressed."[41] Moral action to correct the inequities which oppress the poor and bind them to their destitution, both in the short term through immediate acts of charity and in the long term through political reformation of the "structures of sin," becomes the chief means of overcoming the failure to love which is at the root of their predicament. The breach in human relationships constitutive of the third mode of sinning, and reflective of a breach in our relationship with the trinitarian God, can be overcome, then, only by promoting social justice which struggle for human dignity and freedom is best and most surely effected by practicing a preferential option for the poor.

Lastly, since sin at bottom is a theological term, it would be most reasonable to define it directly in relation to the divine: as a rejection of God, that is, as a refusal of God's grace, the fourth mode of sin presented above. Refusal, of course, implies an act of the will and human action in freedom can not be separated out from its context, namely the divine offer of grace, God's "benevolence toward human beings."[42] Furthermore, human freedom

---

[40]Baum, "Critical Theology," 289.

[41]"This is basically a religious and moral decision," Gregory Baum, "Liberation Theology and the 'Supernatural,'" *The Ecumenist* 19:6 (Sep-Oct 1981), 84.

[42]In this section I am indebted to Roger Haight useful chapter, "Sin and Grace" in *Systematic Theology*, Vol. II, ed. Francis Schüssler Fiorenza and John Galvin, 77-141 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991). The shorthand definition of grace is found on p. 107.

is exercised most saliently in the social arena, the nexus of our life with others in history.[43]

Since God meets us *in* history, God's offer of grace as divine and superabundant self-communication comes to us not just individually but also socially. Extending this reasoning further, the process of "the self" opening up to accept the divine offer—living the life of grace, as it is often dubbed—can be considered something achievable both individually, in a process of self-transcendence, and socially, in what might be termed a process of communal-transcendence.[44] Thus the society as a whole, or least the People of God within it, would by their corporate actions be moving nearer to "the incomprehensible mystery . . . which we call God" through an ever-closer approximation of the kingdom of God here on earth. Social justice, as a result, would constitute the hallmark of that reign.

The mechanism for apprehension of grace operates within the boundaries of freedom: God's free offer is incorporated into human action through the exercise of our free choice, the gift of cooperative grace, as explained by St. Bernard of Clairvaux thus:

---

[43]Haight accepts as axiomatic that social institutions within the culture, as products of prior, or original sin, distort values and tempt us towards selfishness as much as human concupiscence does. Conversely, when infused with the grace that comes from God, sinful structures can actually become graced social institutions, as will be seen later on.

[44]In Karl Rahner's theological anthropology a human person "is understood as the existent of transcendental necessity who in every categorical act of knowledge and of freedom always transcends himself and the categorical object towards the incomprehensible mystery . . . which we call God," Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity* (New York, NY: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1998), 209. Cf. Pope John Paul II's observation: "Man [*sic*] receives from God his essential dignity and with it the capacity to transcend every social order so as to move towards truth and goodness" (*Centesimus annus*, §38, 468).

What was begun by grace alone, is completed by grace and free choice together, in such a way that they contribute to each new achievement not singly but jointly; not by turns, but simultaneously. It is not as if grace did one half of the work and free choice the other; but each does the whole work, according to its own peculiar contribution.[45]

The purpose, as it were, of God's ongoing presence to us is to help us transcend the barriers of temptation and fear that impinge upon and pollute human action.[46] In this understanding, it is the rejection of God's offer of transcendence that actually constitutes the fourth mode of sin.

"Social grace" is the term Haight uses to explain the dynamic of grace in the communal context.[47] The end (*telos*) of human existence is union with God which, given the nature of *perichoresis* as constitutive of the life of the Trinity, can only be for us a union of love and self-giving. From the human perspective, salvation for life with God (Rahner's notion of wanting "to exist in a salvific relationship to God")[48] is something that can not be achieved individually—though it begins with personal appropriation of grace in

---

[45]Bernard of Clairvaux, *On Grace and Free Choice*, §47; quoted in Haight, *Systematic Theology*, 124.

[46]The limits of sin, Haight argues, are bounded not only by overt acts of destruction but also in "the sins of passivity or omission [when they] are viewed against the horizon of God's grace, and on the assumption that God has assigned a purpose for human freedom within this world, they appear as an abdication of responsibility that is equally serious and ravaging," ibid., 101.

[47]Haight posits both a subjective and objective aspect to social grace: "Institutions dedicated to the enhancement of the common good stem [subjectively] from self-transcending freedom that is actively concerned with equality and the protection of life. . . . [and] when the influence of these structures urges self-transcendence in the service of other human beings, the institutions in question may be considered [objective] channels of God's grace," ibid., 130-31.

[48]Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 309.

freedom—but must incorporate giving to others in love as fundamental. Moral acts are

those which further God's plan for humanity, the advancement of the reign of God here on

earth through the establishment of graced social structures.[49] Egalitarian social progress is

seen, then, not as mere utopian ideal, and certainly not understood as Marxist ideology;

rather, the move from social injustice towards liberation from oppression is in fact meant to

be humanity's project under the power of God's grace.

Creating "structures of grace" (vs. "structures of sin") is the term used sometimes to

describe the reformation of social sin by means of taking actions which institutionalize love

of neighbor.[50] Hannah Arendt, interestingly, gives (from Augustine) a perceptive

explanation of the processes of grace operative here in a way that ties love of neighbor to

moral self-examination and ongoing conversion:

> The neighbor . . . is the constant reminder of one's own sin, which continues to be sin, even though divine grace has made it a thing of the past. He [*sic*] is a living warning against pride, because he is never seen in terms of his worldly existence, but always either as one in whom God has already worked his grace or as one who is still caught up in sin. If God's grace has already worked in him, the neighbor both demands the Christian's love and his humble respect for the grace in him. If the neighbor is caught up in sin, he is no different from what the Christian was once and would still be but for

---

[49]We catch glimpses of eternity in this life when we engage in the morally good decision-making that "draws its power and its life from that supernatural self-communication of God in grace which gives the eternity-making act of moral freedom its ultimate and radical depths," ibid., 273.

[50]This notion is implied in Pope John Paul II's inspiring words: "The decisions which create a human environment can give rise to specific structures of sin which impede the full realization of those who are in any way oppressed by them. To destroy such structures and replace them with more authentic forms of living in community is a task which demands courage and patience" (*Centesimus annus*, §38, 468).

the grace of God. In this second case, the neighbor is a sign of our *own peril* along with the reminder of our past.[51]

Aware of our shortcomings both in fully accepting God's grace and in our ability to transcend sin, we can, as moral agents, still work to create those changes in society which are hallmarks of the eschatological endpoint in time, the fullness of the kingdom of God.

Rather than viewed as "add-ons" to our life as Christians, actions taken in behalf of social reformation of sinful structures—best achieved, if we have learned anything from magisterial teaching, through the exercise of a preferential option for the poor—become the chief means of appropriating God's grace into our lives. This rationale is the basis for claiming *orthopraxis* as essential to the life of the Christian: to do the good is not only for the benefit of neighbor, but also for ourselves: as "hearers of the word," we are able through acts of social justice to tune our grace-receptive antennae (so to speak) ever more finely to the frequency of God's communication which then allows us to take in ever new bounties of grace. Praxis is also the main way for the well-off to break out of their hidebound selves and slavishness to the comforts of this world, the "false consciousness" that Gregory Baum has perceptively warned us about.

Furthermore, work on behalf of and with the poor creates a kind of knowledge, the grace of *caritas* one could say, a learning which comes from giving that is distinct from conceptualized understanding. Much of the magisterial teaching on social sin and conversion envisions the *christifideles* as overcoming sin by finally "coming to their senses"

---

[51]Stephan Kampowski's own translation of Arendt's dissertation, *Der Liebesbegriff bei Augustin*, 83-84; found in Kampowski, *Arendt, Augustine, and the New Beginning*, 183.

and realizing the error of their ways: repentance occurring as a cognitive byproduct of insight. But a more action-oriented perspective is presented by Roger Haight, a view of grace that unites conversion with witness:

> Through action one does not merely know *about* God and God's will in a kind of objective knowledge in which subject and object are separated. Through action God is appropriated by the connatural knowledge that can be mediated only by doing God's will. Human action, a taking up and acting on the basis of that which is known theoretically, makes the doctrine of grace a principle of one's behavior. In this qualitatively different kind of knowledge mediated by action the distance and separation between the object of faith and the believer are overcome. One possesses because one is possessed by the Spirit of God.[52]

With an apprehension of social justice that is internalized deeply within, moral action becomes not only an expression of the good in the temporal sphere, but also a revelation of the divine which can then become a source of inspiration for others. If Gustavo Gutiérrez is correct in saying that "the all-powerful God is also a 'weak' God,"[53] dependent on human actions taken in freedom in this world to advance the reign of God, then our moral behavior becomes grace-in-action, our life in this world which connects us to the life beyond. Though our freedom and knowledge are socially situated and thus limited, sometimes even hamstrung, God's grace—which *is* absolute freedom and knowledge—is always available to help us transcend the particular limitations of the moment in order to open ourselves up to the eternal good. The sinfulness in sin may derive ultimately, not from what we do—or even from what we do not do—but from our rejection of what God has offered us:

---

[52]Haight, *Systematic Theology*, 139.

[53]Gustavo Gutiérrez, *On Job: God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent*, trans. J. J. O'Connell (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 78.

participation through grace in the trinitarian life of the divine, for and in this world, for and in the next.

What the "additional voices from outside the hierarchical magisterium" brought forward here in this last chapter have contributed is not so much "new theology" as a retrieval of certain classic doctrines made to fit onto and help resolve the novel difficulties presented in comprehending sin in its social dimensions. The so-called four modes of sin presented above were merely constructs designed to help understand the various ways that our ability—indeed, the responsibility—to transcend the culturally situated present can inform our moral agency. Although the conundrum of social sin in the context of moral agency has not be "solved," this dissertation has systemized what the CELAM bishops and Pope John Paul II have said about various issues relating to the parameters of the problem. By filling in the gap, as it were, of some of the lacunae disclosed with both theological and extra-theological observations (sociological, moral, philosophical, etc.), this thesis has expanded upon the magisterial teaching in ways that have helped frame the important issues going forward in what must be ongoing analysis of the interface of social sin and moral agency.

Postscript

Oftentimes, in recognizing the sinful nature of societal structures and systems of social organization, the phrase "we participate in social sin" is used, terminology which has a rather vague agential quality to it. Hannah Arendt would be more plain spoken

here: "An adult . . . actually *supports* the organization."[54] Though we are loathe to admit it,

our personal actions which, intentionally or not, end up colluding with the structures of

economic injustice and maintain the marginalization of the poor in society actually *support*

social sin. We might begin, then, our reevaluation of moral agency in regard to social sin by

acknowledging in authenticity the active nature of our roles in fostering it.

Only by accepting personal responsibility for sinful situations is a first step toward

conversion even possible, for individuals and most especially, for groups.[55] An overly

deterministic view of social sin as something "out there" can further self-exculpating

deniability for the wrongs of the world and end up stymieing personal and corporate

conversion. Moreover, ethical actions may be deemed as not necessarily going far enough

if they extend only to areas of private morality, such as "arms-length" charitable giving,

while at the same time ignoring large-scale justice issues: remedial measures which address

the plight of the poor but ignore the structural basis of their misery may only further collude

with the idolatrous ethos of the existing system. In fact, trying to avoid responsibility for

the injustice of social sin can itself be considered sinful, the notion of complicity or denial:

apathy in the face of blatant evil, acceptance of the "way things are" resulting from a certain

---

[54]Arendt, "Personal Responsibility Under Dictatorship," 46. "Even in a strictly bureaucratic organization, with its fixed hierarchical order, it would make much more sense to look upon the functioning of the "cogs" and wheels in terms of overall support for a common enterprise than in our usual terms of obedience to superiors," ibid., 47.

[55]"To place the blame for individuals' sins on external factors . . . would be to deny the person's dignity and freedom, which are manifested—even though in a negative and disastrous way—in this responsibility for sin committed" (*Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, §16). The same responsibility to look within can be held as necessary in terms of group consciousness, as well, and best achieved, perhaps, through activation that much overlooked "third form" of the Rite of Penance.

sloth to know about and act on the truth of a situation, as well as resignation to the status quo because of the difficulties inherent in changing the system, can all be considered culpable matters in allowing for the persistence of social sin—even in the absence of any personal contribution to the originating conditions.[56] And finally, in line with acts of reparation for personal sin wherein an individual's performed personal penance functions as "proof" of the penitent's return to God, the magisteria have taught us correctly about the need for *structural change*: it is incumbent in overcoming social sin that evidence of repentance be verified by changes in the social structures themselves.

If the incarnation is God's pledge of love for us and the basis of our hope for salvation, then that which works against the communication of God's gracious love can only be considered sin. Oppression and injustice are understood in this framework not as social problems, but as sinful acts against the divine order for creation. When God's hope is not allowed to function as designed because of humanity's perpetuation of violence and inequity, "Victims are robbed of access to a transcendent hope that might afford them some comfort in the midst of their distress."[57] Social sin, then, is also denial of the divine future, a frustration to the full in-breaking of the kingdom of God. As a consequence of this connection, any hope for our own individual salvation can not be separated from God's

---

[56]All these points are made forcefully by John Paul II when he castigates the self-exonerations "of those who are in a position to avoid, eliminate or at least limit certain social evils but who fail to do so out of laziness, fear or the conspiracy of silence, through secret complicity or indifference; of those who take refuge in the supposed impossibility of changing the world and also of those who sidestep the effort and sacrifice required, producing specious reasons of higher order," *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, §16, 39.

[57]Peters, *Sin: Radical Evil*, 17.

hope for all of humankind, but rather, must exist in communion with that divine intention, embedded in the reality of a historical present and cognizant of a sinful past.[58] Personal conversion, even and especially in the context of a sinful world, can not be abstracted out of social conversion.[59] From Bernard Häring's trenchant analysis of social sin, Mark O'Keefe notes, "Every person must ultimately choose either sin-solidarity or saving-solidarity."[60] True Christian conversion may occur only when we individually, and especially corporately, embody Christ—through concrete social action in solidarity with poor and against the structural injustice of the world—and in that embrace of resurrected hope come to discover that our values have changed along the way.

It may seems foolhardy to claim that any good can be found in sin. A statement closer to the mark might be that much good can come out of the study of sin. Through a kind of *via negativa* one can approach the interplay of moral agency and social sin and learn, perhaps apophatically, something about the nature of humanity's troubled relationship with God. But in the end what remains most clear, as was said by the Latin American bishops at Medellín and Puebla—and also by the bishop in Rome—is what, at bottom,

---

[58]"Conversion is existential, intensely personal, utterly intimate. But it is not so private as to be solitary. . . . What can become communal, can become historical"; Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 130.

[59]"To hear the voice of the poor is to receive, in other words, the grace of conversion"; Kerans, *Sinful Social Structures*, 107.

[60]Mark O'Keefe, O.S.B., *An Analysis and Critique of the Social Aspects of Sin and Conversion in the Moral Theology of Bernard Häring* (Ph.D. diss., The Catholic University of America, 1987), 161. Häring bases his notion of saving-solidarity, sharing in the hope of and working for the salvation of others, scripturally on Galatians 6:2, "Bear one another's burdens, and so you will fulfill the law of Christ"; ibid., 200-201.

always seems to overwhelm: the "mystery of sin." This could be the grounds for a kind of

despair were in not for another, predominating reality, expressed by Saint Bernard in his

Sermon 61:

> What sin is there so deadly that it cannot be pardoned by the death of Christ? And so if I bear in mind this strong, effective remedy, I can never again be terrified by the malignancy of sin.

APPENDIX

THE ORIGINAL SPANISH VERSION OF TEXTS QUOTED IN THE DISSERTATION

Below are found the original Spanish texts of passages taken from the CELAM documents cited in the body of dissertation which were judged to be well enough paraphrased in the official English translations of the documents—without prejudice to either the literal or figurative intent of the authors—as to allow them to be placed safely here in an appendix. Whenever certain emphases and nuances were *not* readily apparent in the official English translations used, the original Spanish version of the excerpt was placed into the main body of the text, given in braces immediately following the citation in the footnote to each pericope. In order to avoid confusion, the use of "ibid." with the CELAM texts is foregone in favor of an abbreviated citation.

Chapter 1, footnote 72: "La Iglesia de América Latina se dispone ahora a una nueva proclamación de su Mensaje a la luz del Concilio Vaticano II. Por eso se congrega en la 'comunión del Espíritu' que asegura y manifiesta el acontecimiento salvífico de un nuevo Pentecostés para América Latina," CELAM, Segunda Conferencia General del Episcopado Latinoamericano [Medellín], *La Iglesia en la Actual Transformation de América Latina a la Luz del Concilio. I Ponencias*, Edición Oficial del Secretariado General del CELAM (Santiago, Chile: Ediciones Paulinas, 1968), 106.

Chapter 1, footnote 74: "Aún estamos lejos de vivir todo lo que predicamos," CELAM, III Conferencia General del Episcopado Latinoamericano [Puebla], *La Evangelización en el presente y en el futuro de América Latina. Documento de Puebla* (Bogotá, Colombia: Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano, 1979), 40.

Chapter 1, footnote 75: "Queremos no solamente ayudar a los demás en su conversión, sino también convertirnos juntamente con ellos, de tal modo que nuestras diócesis, parroquias, instituciones, comunidades, congregaciones religiosas, lejos de ser obstáculo sean un incentivo para vivir el Evangelio," CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 44.

Chapter 1, footnote 76: "El Evangelio que predicamos es una Buena Nueva tan espléndida que convierte, que transforma los esquemas mentales y afectivos," CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 47.

Chapter 3, epigraph, page 127: "[El compromiso con los pobres y los oprimidos y el surgimiento de las Comunidades de Base han ayudado a la Iglesia a descubrir el potencial evangelizador de los pobres] en cuanto la interpelan constantemente, llamándola a la conversión [§1147]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 240. . . . "Tenemos conciencia de que la transformación de estructuras es una expresión externa de la conversión interior. Sabemos que esta conversión empieza por nosotros mismos. Sin el testimonio de una Iglesia convertida serían vanas nuestras palabras de pastores [§1221]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 251.

Chapter 3, footnote 7: "El juicio de la historia sobre esas luces y sombras"; CELAM, Segunda Conferencia General del Episcopado Latinoamericano [Medellín], *La Iglesia en la Actual Transformation de América Latina a la Luz del Concilio. II Conclusiones*, Edición Oficial del Secretariado General del CELAM (Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1968), 41.

Chapter 3, footnote 8: "La responsabilidad histórica que recae sobre ella [la Iglesia] en el presente"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia, II Conclusiones*, 41.

Chapter 3, footnote 9: "Llamamos a todos los hombres de buena voluntad para que colaboren en la verdad, la justicia, el amor y la libertad, en esta tarea transformadora de nuestros pueblos, al alba de una era nueva"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia, II Conclusiones*, 36.

Chapter 3, footnote 13: "Puede insistir en la pedagogía del cambio"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia, I Ponencias*, 83.

Chapter 3, footnote 15: "[La Iglesia] puede despertar las conciencias y formarlas e indicar los caminos más obvios de al acción que precisa . . . que favorezca al desarrollo integral de nuestros pueblos y nuestros países. . . . Puede y debe incluso, donde precisa y donde le es posible, promover, en colaboración con otras fuerzas sociales, todas aquellas obras de promoción y desarrollo que pueden servir de muestras y de incentivos para todo el proceso"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia, I Ponencias*, 98.

Chapter 3, footnote 16: "Denunciar claramente los males existentes . . . Pero a la palabra ha de seguir la acción"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia, I Ponencias*, 98.

Chapter 3, footnote 18: "Una *fidelidad personal*, una respuesta gozosa y total a un llamamiento divino"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia, I Ponencias*, 110.

Chapter 3, footnote 19: "El compromiso urgente para la Iglesia de denunciar proféticamete las situaciones injustas que cierran al hombre las posibilidades concretas de su misión"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia, I Ponencias*, 111.

Chapter 3, footnote 20: "La Iglesia de América Latina se siente hoy llamada a dar un testimonio particular de pobreza. . . . Experimenta, por eso, la necesidad de verse libre Ella misma de ataduras temporales que la comprometen, desprendida de bienes innecesarios que la paralizan"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia, I Ponencias*, 114.

Chapter 3, footnote 21: "Las parroquias se conviertan en irradiadores de la formación auténtica de comunidades humano-cristianas. . . . No solamente administrando los sacramentos o pregonando las verdades del Evangelio; . . . despertando en estos hombres el sentido de su dignidad . . . estimulándolos a exigir . . . el respeto a la persona humana y a sus inalienables prerrogativas"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia, I Ponencias*, 135.

Chapter 3, footnote 22: "Las parroquias no serán sólo foco de vida espiritual, sino centros de una integral formación del hombre"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia, I Ponencias*, 135.

Chapter 3, footnote 23: "El hombre evangelizado *se convierte* primero *en un creyente que rompe interiormente* su relación absoluta con un mundo humano y se religa personal y totalmente con Dios"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia, I Ponencias*, 151.

Chapter 3, footnote 24: "El 'ambiente,"—ese conjunto de valores, de ideas, de modelos . . . es el que en la actualidad modela inconscientemente las mentalidades, imponiéndoles criterios y modelos de acción"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia, I Ponencias*, 156.

Chapter 3, footnote 25: "La fe del convertido no se reduce a una adhesión a las verdades dogmáticas reveladas y propuestas por la Iglesia, a una especie de firma al pie del credo: es un cambio de vida, un cambio de mentalidad, un acontecimiento que abarca la totalidad de su ser, un encuentro personal con Cristo"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia, I Ponencias*, 162-63.

Chapter 3, footnote 28: "Positivamente, iluminemos las conciencias, alentemos y suscitemos iniciativas sociales. . . . De aquí la doble necesidad de formarles la conciencia en sus deberes sociales y cristianos"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia, I Ponencias*, 212.

Chapter 3, footnote 29: "Proyectar sobre ellos la luz de la visión cristiana del mundo y esclarecer las obligaciones del cristiano en el quehacer solidario para un mundo mejor y más pacífico"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia, I Ponencias*, 217.

Chapter 3, footnote 30: "Una Iglesia burocrática, de una Iglesia cuyos grandes edificios implican poder y riqueza, de una Iglesia comprometida con las estructuras profanas de una sociedad dominada por poderes oligárquicos, de una Iglesia sumida en el inmovilismo"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia, I Ponencias*, 234.

Chapter 3, footnote 31: "La necesidad de que todas las estructuras de la Iglesia manifiesten un espíritu de servicio, que en América Latina reclama especialmente el testimonio de pobreza"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia, I Ponencias*, 243.

Chapter 3, footnote 32: "La pobreza evangélica . . . santificación personal . . . el máximo ahorro para las obras de promoción social de los necesitados y marginados; . . . la sencillez evangélica . . . si queremos que las formas institucionales de la Iglesia logren ser en el mundo contemporáneo eficientes estructuras de apostolado y de conquista de los corazones para la Fe y la caridad de Cristo"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia, I Ponencias*, 243.

Chapter 3, footnote 34: "Antes del cambio de estructuras es necesario el cambio de mentalidad. . . . Y mejor que un cambio de mentalidad, un cambio del corazón, una profunda y continuada conversión de todo el hombre, una renovación del espíritu"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia, I Ponencias*, 257.

Chapter 3, footnote 35: "Cada día, debemos estar en el mundo y habitar entre los hombres, ser pobres con los pobres . . . levantar la voz para denunciar las injusticias . . . evangelizar a los pobres . . . porque su causa es la causa de Cristo"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia, I Ponencias*, 264.

Chapter 3, footnote 36: "La falta de solidaridad, que lleva, en el plano individual y social, a cometer verdaderos pecados, cuya cristalización aparece evidente en las estructuras injustas que caracterizan la situación de América Latina"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, *II Conclusiones*, 52.

Chapter 3, footnote 37: "La originalidad del mensaje cristiano no consiste directamente en la afirmación de la necesidad de un cambio de estructuras, sino en la insistencia en la conversión del hombre, que exige luego este cambio. No tendremos un continente nuevo sin nuevas y renovadas estructuras; sobre todo, no habrá continente nuevo sin hombres nuevos, que a la luz del Evangelio sepan ser verdaderamente libres y responsables"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, *II Conclusiones*, 52.

Chapter 3, footnote 38: "No solamente será una institución de beneficencia, sino que debe insertarse de modo más operante en el proceso de desarrollo de América Latina, como una institución verdaderamente promotora"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, *II Conclusiones*, 61.

Chapter 3, footnote 40: "El subdesarrollo latinoamericano . . . Aquellas realidades que expresan una situación de pecado"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, *II Conclusiones*, 65.

Chapter 3, footnote 41: "Las desigualdades excesivas impiden sistemáticamente la satisfacción de las legítimas aspiraciones de los sectores postergados. Se generan así frustraciones crecientes"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, *II Conclusiones*, 66.

Chapter 3, footnote 42: "Algunos miembros de los sectores dominantes recurren, a veces, al uso de la fuerza para reprimir drásticamente todo intento de reacción"; CELAM II [Medellín], La Iglesia, II Conclusiones, 66.

Chapter 3, footnote 43: "Puede llamarse de violencia institucionalizada . . . violándose así derechos fundamentales"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, *II Conclusiones*, 72.

Chapter 3, footnote 44: "La dignidad del pueblo . . . reclama que las transformaciones necesarias se realicen desde dentro, es decir, mediante una conveniente toma de conciencia"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, *II Conclusiones*, 72.

Chapter 3, footnote 46: "A nosotros, pastores de la Iglesia, nos corresponde educar las conciencias"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, *II Conclusiones*, 75.

Chapter 3, footnote 47: "Como autores de su proprio progreso"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, *II Conclusiones*, 92.

Chapter 3, footnote 48: "Convierte al educando en sujeto de su proprio desarrollo"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, *II Conclusiones*, 93.

Chapter 3, footnote 49: "Como toda liberación es ya un anticipo de la plena redención de Cristo, la Iglesia de América Latina se siente particularmente solidaria con todo esfuerzo educativo tendiente a liberar a nuestros pueblos"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, *II Conclusiones*, 94.

Chapter 3, footnote 51: "Los tradicionalistas o conservadores manifiestan poca o ninguna conciencia social, tienen mentalidad burguesa y por lo mismo no cuestionan las estructuras sociales. En general se preocupan por mantener sus privilegios que ellos identifican con el 'orden establecido.' Su actuación en la comunidad posee un carácter paternalista y asistencial, sin niguna preocupación por la modificación del statu-quo"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, *II Conclusiones*, 124.

Chapter 3, footnote 52: "La separación entre fe y responsabilidad social. . . . La pertenencia a la Iglesia es más de tipo tradicional y, a veces, interesada"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, *II Conclusiones*, 125.

Chapter 3, footnote 53: "Debe explicar los valores de justicia y fraternidad, contenidos en las aspiraciones de nuestros pueblos, en una perspectiva escatológica"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, *II Conclusiones*, 126.

Chapter 3, footnote 54: "Un compromiso en el plano de las estructuras socio-económicas que conduzcan a las necesarias reformas de las mismas"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, *II Conclusiones*, 128.

Chapter 3, footnote 56: "Para promover el desarrollo integral del hombre formará a los laicos y los animará a particpar activamente con conciencia cristiana en la técnica y elaboración del progreso"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, *II Conclusiones*, 174.

Chapter 3, footnote 57: "Pero en el orden económico y social, y principalmente en el orden político, en donde se presentan diversas opciones concretas, al sacerdote como tal no le incumbre directamente la decisión, ni el liderazgo, ni tampoco la estructuración de soluciones"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, *II Conclusiones*, 174.

Chapter 3, footnote 58: "Trabajar más que nunca por la unidad de los hombres, hasta dar la vida por ellos, como lo hiciera el Buen Pastor"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, *II Conclusiones*, 174-75.

Chapter 3, footnote 59: "La pobreza evangélica . . . una de las características indispensables de la espiritualidad sacerdotal"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, *II Conclusiones*, 176.

Chapter 3, footnote 60: "Tomar conciencia de los graves problemas sociales de vastos sectores del pueblo en que vivimos"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, *II Conclusiones*, 185.

Chapter 3, footnote 61: "Se pide al sacerdote de hoy saber interpretar habitualmente, a la luz de la fe, las situaciones y exigencias de la comunidad . . . [desde que] la pastoral latinoamericana se halla comprometida en la promoción humana, a fin de que cada hombre se realice a sí mismo y goce de los bienes de la naturaleza"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, *II Conclusiones*, 197.

Chapter 3, footnote 62: "Todos los miembros de la Iglesia están llamados a vivir la pobreza evangélica"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, *II Conclusiones*, 209.

Chapter 3, footnote 63: "Ser signo y compromiso . . . compromiso de solidaridad con los que sufren"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, *II Conclusiones*, 210.

Chapter 3, footnote 64: "Una distribución de los esfuerzos y del personal apostólico [debe ser aquélla] que dé preferencia efectiva a los sectores más pobres y necesitados"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, *II Conclusiones*, 210.

Chapter 3, footnote 65: "Debemos agudizar la conciencia del deber de solidaridad con los pobres . . . Esto ha de concretarse en la denuncia de la injusticia y la opresión, en la lucha cristiana contra la intolerable situación que soporta con frecuencia el pobre, en la disposición al diálogo con los grupos responsables de esa situación para hacerles comprender sus obligaciones"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, *II Conclusiones*, 211.

Chapter 3, footnote 66: "Estos ejemplos auténticos de desprendimiento y libertad de espíritu, harán que los demás miembros del Pueblo de Dios den testimonio análogo de pobreza . . . una sincera conversión ha de cambiar la mentalidad individualista en otra de sentido social y preocupación por el bien común"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, *II Conclusiones*, 212-13.

Chapter 3, footnote 67: "Esté libre de ataduras temporales, de connivencias y de prestigio ambiguo . . . sea más transparente y fuerte su misión de servicio; que esté presente en la vida y las tareas temporales, reflejando la luz de Cristo, presente en la construcción del mundo . . . cuando se dispone orgánicamente la economía y el poder en beneficio de la comunidad"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, *II Conclusiones*, 213.

Chapter 3, footnote 68: "La Iglesia en América Latina . . . se ha esforzado por llamar a una continua conversión individual y social [§16]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 54.

Chapter 3, footnote 69: "Sería posible desarraigar la extrema pobreza y mejorar la calidad de vida de nuestro pueblo; se esto es posible, es, entonces, una obligación [§21]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 55.

Chapter 3, footnote 70: "Un escándalo y una contradicción con el ser cristiano . . . contrario al plan del Creador . . . el más devastador y humillante flagelo [§28, 29]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 56. [Within the footnote:] "Un obstáculo insuperable para establecer el Reinado de la paz [§138] . . . amargamente, hasta límites extremos, esta fuerza del pecado, flagrante contradicción del plan divino [§186]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 71, 82.

Chapter 3, footnote 72: "La Iglesia discierne una situación de pecado social, de gravedad tanto mayor por darse en países que se llaman católicos y que tienen la capacidad de cambiar [§28]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 56. [Within the footnote:] "Debe hacer oír su voz denunciando y condenando estas situaciones, más aún cuando los gobernantes o responsables se profesan cristianos [§42]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 57.

Chapter 3, footnote 73: Esta realidad exige, pues, conversión personal y cambios profundos de las estruturas, que respondan a las legítimas aspiraciones del pueblo hacia una verdadera justicia social [§30]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 56.

Chapter 3, footnote 74: "Vemos que en lo más profundo de ellas [las raíces] existe un misterio de pecado [§70]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 70.

Chapter 3, footnote 75: "La persona humana, llamada a dominar el mundo, impregna los mecanismos de la sociedad de valores materialistas [§70]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 70.

Chapter 3, footnote 76: "Más sencillez y pobreza en su forma de vida [§114]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 68. [Within the footnote:] "La Iglesia, poco a poco, se ha ido desligando de quienes detentan el poder económico o político, liberándose de dependencias y prescindiendo de privilegios [§623]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 164.

Chapter 3, footnote 77: "Cambios estructurales que aseguren una situación justa para las grandes mayorías [§134]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 70.

Chapter 3, footnote 78: "La Iglesia requiere ser cada día más independiente de los poderes del mundo . . . el desarrollo de aquellas variadísimas actividades que llevan a los fieles a traducir . . . los imperativos morales que dimanan de esa misma fe [§144]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 71. [Within the footnote:] "Iluminar y ayudar. Ciertamente también, pudimos haber hecho más [§268]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 97.

Chapter 3, footnote 79: "Cumpliendo la misión que les es propria, son enviados como su vanguardia, en medio de la vida del mundo, para rehacer las estructuras sociales, económicas y políticas, de acuerdo con el plan de Dios [§154]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 73.

Chapter 3, footnote 80: "Como Señor de nuestra historia e inspirador de un verdadero cambio social y los intentos por limitarlo al campo de la conciencia individual [§174]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 80.

Chapter 3, footnote 81: "La Iglesia . . . profesa que todo atropello a la dignidad del hombre es atropello al mismo Dios, de quien es imagen. Por lo tanto, la Evangelización en el presente y en el futuro de América Latina exige de la Iglesia una palabra clara sobre la dignidad del hombre [§306]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 105.

Chapter 3, footnote 82: "Es grave obligación nuestra proclamar . . . la dignidad que a todos, sin distinción alguna les es propria . . . [y profesar] que toda vida humana merece por sí misma, en cualquier circunstancia, su dignificación; que toda convivencia humana tiene que fundarse en el bien común, consistente en la realización cada vez más fraterna de la común dignidad [§316, 317]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 108.

Chapter 3, footnote 84: "Pero a la actitud personal del pecado . . . corresponde siempre en el plano de las relaciones interpersonales, la actitud de egoísmo, de orgullo, de ambición y envidia que generan injusticia, dominación, violencia a todos los niveles; lucha entre individuos, grupos, clases sociales y pueblos . . . consiguientemente se establecen situaciones de pecado que, a nivel mundial, esclavizan a tantos hombres y condicionan

adversamente la libertad de todos [§328]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 110-11.

Chapter 3, footnote 85: "Con todo, la comunión y participación verdaderas sólo pueden existir en esta vida proyectadas sobre el plano muy concreto de las realidades temporales . . . no se puede hoy en América Latina amar de veras al hermano y por lo tanto a Dios, sin comprometerse a nivel personal y en muchos casos, incluso, a nivel de estructuras, con el servicio y la promoción de los grupos humanos y de los estratos sociales más desposeídos y humillados, con todas las consecuencias que se siguen en el plano de esas realidades temporales [§327]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 110.

Chapter 3, footnote 86: "Con el anuncio fiel y la denuncia profética . . . debemos ejercitarnos en el discernimiento de las situaciones y de los llamados concretos que el Señor hace en cada tiempo, lo cual exige actitud de conversión y apertura y un serio compromiso con lo que se ha discernido como auténticamente evangélico [§338]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 113.

Chapter 3, footnote 87: "En el seno de la comunidad . . . la instancia de decisión y de interpretación auténtica y fiel de la doctrina de la fe y de la ley moral [§374]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 118.

Chapter 3, footnote 88: "Suscitando una conversión que pueda ser base y garantía de la transformación de las estructuras y del ambiente social [§388]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 120.

Chapter 3, footnote 89: "La constante renovación y transformación evangélica de nuestra cultura . . . la penetración por el Evangelio, de los valores y criterios que la [la cultura] inspiran, la conversión de los hombres que viven según esos valores y el cambio que, para ser más plenamente humanas, requieren las estructuras en que aquellos viven y se expresan [§395]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 122.

Chapter 3, footnote 90: "La Iglesia llama, pues, a una renovada conversión en el plano de los valores culturales, para que desde allí se impregnen las estructuras de convivencia con espíritu evangélico. Al llamar a una revitalización de los valores evangélicos, urge a una rápida y profunda transformación de las estructuras, ya que éstas están llamadas, por su misma naturaleza, a contener el mal que nace del corazón del hombre, y que se manifiesta también en forma social y a servir como condiciones pedagógicas para una conversión interior, en el plano de los valores [§438]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 129.

Chapter 3, footnote 91: "Sin duda las situaciones de injusticia y de pobreza aguda son un índice acusador de que la fe no ha tenido la fuerza necesaria para penetrar los criterios y las decisiones de los sectores responsables del liderazgo ideológico y de la organización de la

convivencia social y económica de nuestros pueblos [§437]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 129.

Chapter 3, footnote 93: "Nacen de las ideologías de culturas dominantes y son incoherentes con la fe propia de nuestra cultura popular [§437]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 129.

Chapter 3, footnote 94: "La liberación de todas las servidumbres del pecado personal y social, de todo lo que desgarra al hombre y a la sociedad y que tiene su fuente en el egoísmo, en el misterio de iniquidad [§482]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 137.

Chapter 3, footnote 95: "Transforma al hombre en sujeto de su proprio desarrollo individual y comunitario . . . la liberación del pecado con todas sus seducciones e idolatrías [§485]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 138.

Chapter 3, footnote 96: "Medios evangélicos, con su peculiar eficacia . . . la vigorosa energía y acción de los cristianos, que movidos por el Espíritu, acuden a responder al clamor de millones y millones de hermanos [§486]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 138.

Chapter 3, footnote 97: "Los crueles contrastes de lujo y extrema pobreza . . . manifiestan hasta qué punto nuestros países se encuentran bajo el dominio del ídolo de la riqueza [§494]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 140.

Chapter 3, footnote 98: "El pecado corrompe el uso que los hombres hacen del poder [§500]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 141. [Within the footnote:] "Es un mensaje que libera porque salva de la esclavitud del pecado, raíz y fuente de toda opresión, injusticia, y discriminación [§517]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 143.

Chapter 3, footnote 100: "Favoreciendo su formación y su vida espiritual y estimulándolo en su creatividad para que busque opciones cada vez más conformes con el bien común y las necesidades de los más débiles [§525]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 144.

Chapter 3, footnote 103: "Una educación de todos los miembros de la familia en la justicia y en el amor, de tal manera que puedan ser agentes responsables, solidarios y eficaces para promover soluciones cristianas de la compleja problemática social latinoamericana [§604]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 162.

Chapter 3, footnote 104: "La apertura pastoral de las obras y la opción preferencial por los pobres es la tendencia más notable de la vida religiosa latinoamericana. . . . Esta opción no supone exclusión de nadie, pero sí una preferencia y un acercamiento al pobre [§733]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 180.

Chapter 3, footnote 106: [Within the footnote:] "Alentar a los religiosos a que asuman un compromiso preferencial por los pobres, teniendo en cuenta lo que dijo Juan Pablo II: 'sois sacerdotes y religiosos; no sois dirigentes sociales, líderes políticos o funcionarios de un poder temporal. Por eso os repito: no nos hagamos la ilusión de servir al Evangelio si tratamos de 'diluir' nuestro carisma a través de un interés exagerado hacia el amplio campo de los problemas temporales' [§769]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 185.

Chapter 3, footnote 107: "Como Pastor que se empeña en la liberación integral de los pobres y de los oprimidos, obra siempre con criterios evangélicos (Cf. EN 18). Cree en la fuerza del Espíritu para no caer en la tentación de hacerse líder político, dirigente social o funcionario de un poder temporal; esto le impediría 'ser signo y factor de unidad y de fraternidad' [§696]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 175.

Chapter 3, footnote 108: "Una denuncia evangélica de quienes sirven al dinero y al poder, reservándose egoístamente para sí los bienes que Dios otorga al hombre para beneficio de toda la comunidad [§747]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 182.

Chapter 3, footnote 109: "Los laicos no pueden eximirse de un serio compromiso en la promoción de la justicia y del bien común [§793]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*.

Chapter 3, footnote 110: "Finalmente, resulta de particular gravedad el hecho de un insuficiente esfuerzo en el discernimiento de las causas y condicionamientos de la realidad social y en especial sobre los instrumentos y medios para una transformación de la sociedad. Esto es necesario como iluminación de la acción de los cristianos para evitar, tanto la asimilación acrítica de ideologías como espiritualismo de evasión. Además, así se hace factible, descubrir caminos para la acción, superada la mera denuncia [§826]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 192.

Chapter 3, footnote 111: "La participación en la liturgia no incide adecuadamente el compromiso social de los cristianos. La instrumentalización , que a veces se hace de la misma, desfigura su valor evangelizador [§902]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 204.

Chapter 3, footnote 112: "La liturgia es también fuerza en el peregrinar, a fin de llevar a cabo, mediante el compromiso transformador de la vida, la realización plena del Reino, según el plan de Dios [§918]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 205.

Chapter 3, footnote 113: "Han mostrado una fe poco vigorosa para vencer sus egoísmos, su individualismo y su apego a las riquezas, obrando injustamente y lesionando la unidad de la sociedad y de la misma Iglesia [§966]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 211.

Chapter 3, footnote 114: "Las ideologías en boga saben que las universidades son un campo propicio para su infiltración y para obtener el dominio en la cultura y en la sociedad [§1053]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 223.

Chapter 3, footnote 115: "Conocida la situación de pobreza, marginalidad e injusticia en que están sumidas grandes masas latinoamericanas y de violación de los derechos humanos, la Iglesia, en el uso de sus Medios propios, debe ser cada día más la voz de los desposeídos, aún, con el riesgo que ello implica [§1094]"; CELAM III [Puebla], La Evangelización, 228.

Chapter 3, footnote 116: "Afirmamos la necesidad de conversión de toda la Iglesia para una opción preferencial por los pobres, con miras a su liberación integral [§1134]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 238. [Within the footnote:] "Volvemos a tomar, con renovada esperanza en la fuerza vivificante del Espíritu, la posición de la II Conferencia General que hizo una clara y profética opción preferencial y solidaria por los pobres [§1134]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 238.

Chapter 3, footnote 117: "No todos en la Iglesia in América Latina nos hemos comprometido suficientemente con los pobres; no siempre nos preocupamos por ellos y somos solidarios con ellos. Su servicio exige, en efecto, una conversión y purificación constantes, en todos los cristianos, para el logro de una identificación cada día más plena con Cristo pobre y con los pobres [§1140]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 239.

Chapter 3, footnote 118: "El compromiso con los pobres y los oprimidos y el surgimiento de las Comunidades de Base han ayudado a la Iglesia a descubrir el potencial evangelizador de los pobres, en cuanto la interpelan constantemente, llamándola a la conversión [§1147]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 240.

Chapter 3, footnote 121: "La actitud del cristiano debe ser la del que usa de los bienes de este mundo (cuyas estructuras son transitorias) sin absolutizarlas, pues son solo medios para llegar al Reino [§1148]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 241.

Chapter 3, footnote 122: "La pobreza evangélica se lleva a la práctica también con la comunicación y participación de los bienes materiales y espirituales [§1150]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 241.

Chapter 3, footnote 123: "Los falsos ideales de una sociedad de consumo . . . liberándolos de esta esclavitud y de su egoísmo [§1156]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 242.

Chapter 3, footnote 124: "El cambio necesario de las estructuras sociales, políticas y económicas injustas no será verdadero y pleno si no va acompañado por el cambio de mentalidad personal y colectiva respecto al ideal de una vida humana digna y feliz que a su vez dispone a la conversión [§1155]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 242.

Chapter 3, footnote 125: "Hay muchos jóvenes . . . por su pobreza, se ven obligados a trabajar como personas mayores [§1176]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 244.

Chapter 3, footnote 126: "El espíritu de las Bienaventuranzas [qué] ofrece a todo joven la inserción en un proceso de conversión constante [§1183]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 246.

Chapter 3, footnote 127: "Un conflicto estructural grave [§1209]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 249.

Chapter 3, footnote 128: "La autonomía de las realidades terrestres [§1212] . . . Exigimos para la Iglesia el derecho de dar testimonio de su mensaje y de usar su palabra profética de anuncio y denuncia en sentido evangélico, en la corrección de las imágenes falsas de la sociedad, incompatibles con la visión cristiana [§1213]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 250.

Chapter 3, footnote 129: "A ser agentes de una concientización general de responsabilidad común, frente a un desafio que exige la participación de todos [§1220]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 251.

Chapter 3, footnote 130: "Tenemos conciencia de que la transformación de estructuras es una expresión externa de la conversión interior. Sabemos que esta conversión empieza por nosotros mismos. Sin el testimonio de una Iglesia convertida serían vanas nuestras palabras de pastores [§1221]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 251.

Chapter 3, footnote 131: "El puente de contacto y diálogo con los constructores de la sociedad temporal, a fin de iluminarlos con la visión cristiana [§1226]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 251.

Chapter 3, footnote 132: "Los constructores de la sociedad . . . la elaboración de una ética social capaz de formular las respuestas cristianas a los grandes problemas de la cultura contemporánea [§1227]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 252.

Chapter 3, footnote 133: "Con los que tienen poder decisorio [§1228]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 252.

Chapter 3, footnote 134: Son muchas las causas de esta situación de injusticia, pero en la raíz de todas se encuentra el pecado, tanto en su aspecto personal como en las estructuras mismas [§1258]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 256-57.

Chapter 3, footnote 135: "La iglesia, experta en humanidad [§1268] . . . frente a la situación de pecado surge . . . el deber de denuncia que tiene que ser objetiva, valiente, y evangélica [§1269]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 258.

Chapter 3, footnote 136: "Asegurando al acceso inmediato y libre de los más débiles a su desarrollo integral . . . los excedentes económicos, los ahorros provenientes del desarme y cualquiera otra riqueza sobre la que, aún a nivel internacional, pesa la 'hipoteca social,' deberán ser utilizados socialmente [§1281]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 260.

Chapter 3, footnote 137: "Del anuncio . . . y de la denuncia . . .la iglesia . . . debe crear . . . una conciencia ética en torno a los grandes problemas internacionales [§1283]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 260.

Chapter 3, footnote 138: "La Iglesia hace un urgente llamado a la conciencia de los pueblos y también a las organizaciones humanitarias [§1292]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 261.

Chapter 3, footnote 139: "Nuestro continente radicalmente cristiano . . . la fe, como vivencia total y norma de vida, no tiene la incidencia que sería de desear en la conducta personal y social de muchos cristianos [§1300]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 266.

Chapter 4, footnote 6: "El hombre latinoamericano sobrevive en una situación social que contradice su condición de habitante de un continente mayoritariamente cristiano: son evidentes las contradicciones existentes entre estructuras sociales injustas y las exigencias del evangelio [§1257]; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 256-57.

Chapter 4, footnote 7: "Nuestro continente radicalmente cristiano . . . la fe, como vivencia total y norma de vida, no tiene la incidencia que sería de desear en la conducta personal y social de muchos cristianos [§1300]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 266.

Chapter 4, footnote 8: "La urbe . . . el influjo de la opinión pública, del ambiente de oficina, del club, de los medios de comunicación . . . [como creando] el 'ambiente,"—ese conjunto de valores, de ideas, de modelos . . . es el que en la actualidad modela inconscientemente las mentalidades, imponiéndoles criterios y modelos de acción"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia, I Ponencias*, 156.

Chapter 4, footnote 9: "Puede insistir en la pedagogía del cambio"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia, I Ponencias*, 83.

Chapter 4, footnote 10: "[La Iglesia] puede despertar las conciencias y formarlas e indicar los caminos más obvios de al acción que precisa . . . que favorezca al desarrollo integral de nuestros pueblos y nuestros países. . . . Puede y debe incluso, donde precisa y donde le es posible, promover, en colaboración con otras fuerzas sociales, todas aquellas obras de promoción y desarrollo que pueden servir de muestras y de incentivos para todo el proceso"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia, I Ponencias*, 98.

Chapter 4, footnote 11: "El egoísmo de ciertos grupos privilegiados que se cierran, en beneficio de sus prerrogativas, a los cambios socio-económicos más necesarios"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia, I Ponencias*, 97. [Within the footnote:] "Estas élites sociales, especialmente en el campo económico, industrial y social . . . en su conjunto, con frecuencia, no tienen conciencia social, o la tienen adormecida; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia, I Ponencias*, 211.

Chapter 4, footnote 12: "Los tradicionalistas o conservadores manifiestan poca o ninguna conciencia social, tienen mentalidad burguesa y por lo mismo no cuestionan las estructuras sociales. En general se preocupan por mantener sus privilegios que ellos identifican con el 'orden establecido.' Su actuación en la comunidad posee un carácter paternalista y asistencial, sin niguna preocupación por la modificación del statu-quo"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, *II Conclusiones*, 124. [Within the footnote:] "Todas las servidumbres del pecado personal y social, de todo lo que desgarra al hombre y a la sociedad y que tiene su fuente en el egoísmo, en el misterio de iniquidad [§482]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 137.

Chapter 4, footnote 15: "El pecado . . . obstaculizará . . . tanto desde el corazón de los hombres, come desde las diversas estructuras por ellos creadas, en las cuales el pecado de sus autores ha impreso su huella destructora [§281]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 100.

Chapter 4, footnote 18: "Las ideologías en boga saben que las universidades son un campo propicio para su infiltración y para obtener el dominio en la cultura y en la sociedad [§1053]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 223.

Chapter 4, footnote 19: "[Los] constructores de una nueva sociedad . . . dar a conocer el mensaje del Evangelio."[§1054]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 223.

Chapter 4, footnote 20: "Debe ser cada día más la voz de los desposeídos [§1094]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 228.

Chapter 4, footnote 25: "Son muchas las causas de esta situación de injusticia, pero en la raíz de todas se encuentra el pecado, tanto en su aspecto personal como en las estructuras mismas [§1258]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 257.

Chapter 4, footnote 26: "La falta de solidaridad, que lleva, en el plano individual y social, a cometer verdaderos pecados, cuya cristalización aparece evidente en las estructuras injustas que caracterizan la situación de América Latina"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, *II Conclusiones*, 52.

Chapter 4, footnote 27: "Muchos han mostrado una fe poco vigorosa para vencer sus egoísmos, su individualismo y su apego a las riquezas, obrando injustamente y lesionando la

unidad de la sociedad y de la misma Iglesia [§966]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 211.

Chapter 4, footnote 31: "La vertiginosa corriente de cambios culturales, sociales, enonómicos, políticos, técnicos de la época moderna" [§76]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 62.

Chapter 4, footnote 32: "Marcado sentido crítico [§77] . . . el indiferentismo [§79] . . . una falsa intepretación del pluralismo religioso" [§80] . . . la ignorancia [§82]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 62, 63.

Chapter 4, footnote 34: [Within the footnote:] "La crisis de valores morales [§69] . . . cuando la persona humana, llamada a dominar el mundo, impregna los mecanismos de la sociedad de valores materialistas [§70]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 61.

Chapter 4, footnote 35: "Pero en el orden económico y social, y principalmente en el orden político, en donde se presentan diversas opciones concretas, al sacerdote como tal no le incumbre directamente la decisión, ni el liderazgo, ni tampoco la estructuración de soluciones"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, *II Conclusiones*, 174.

Chapter 4, footnote 36: "Pastor . . . obra siempre . . . para no caer en la tentación de hacerse líder político, dirigente social o funcionario de un poder temporal [§696]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 175.

Chapter 4, footnote 37: "El laico se ubica . . . en el mundo . . . está comprometido en la construcción del Reino en su dimensión temporal [§787]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 188.

Chapter 4, footnote 38: "Finalmente, resulta de particular gravedad el hecho de un insuficiente esfuerzo en el discernimiento de las causas y condicionamientos de la realidad social y en especial sobre los instrumentos y medios para una transformación de la sociedad. Esto es necesario como iluminación de la acción de los cristianos para evitar, tanto la asimilación acrítica de ideologías como espiritualismo de evasión. Además, así se hace factible, descubrir caminos para la acción, superada la mera denuncia [§826]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 192.

Chapter 4, footnote 46: [Within the footnote:] "A nosotros, pastores de la Iglesia, nos corresponde educar las conciencias"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, *II Conclusiones*, 75.

Chapter 4, footnote 48: "Las parroquias se conviertan en irradiadores de la formación auténtica de comunidades humano-cristianas. . . . No solamente administrando los sacramentos o pregonando las verdades del Evangelio; . . . despertando en estos hombres el

sentido de su dignidad . . . estimulándolos a exigir . . . el respeto a la persona humana y a sus inalienables prerrogativas"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia, I Ponencias*, 135.

Chapter 4, footnote 49: "Debe explicar los valores de justicia y fraternidad, contenidos en las aspiraciones de nuestros pueblos, en una perspectiva escatológica"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, *II Conclusiones*, 126.

Chapter 4, footnote 50: "La separación entre fe y responsabilidad social"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, *II Conclusiones*, 125.

Chapter 4, footnote 52: "La superación de la diferenciación entre pastoral de élites y pastoral popular: la pastoral es una sola [§1215]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 250.

Chapter 4, footnote 54: "Convierte al educando en sujeto de su proprio desarrollo"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, *II Conclusiones*, 93.

Chapter 4, footnote 55: "Como autores de su proprio progreso"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, *II Conclusiones*, 92.

Chapter 4, footnote 57: [Within the footnote:] "Una educación de todos los miembros de la familia en la justicia y en el amor, de tal manera que puedan ser agentes responsables, solidarios y eficaces para promover soluciones cristianas de la compleja problemática social latinoamericana [§604]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 162.

Chapter 4, footnote 58: [Within the footnote:] "Por su parte, la jerarquía le otorgará su solidaridad, favoreciendo su formación y su vida espiritual y estimulándolo en su creatividad para que busque opciones cada vez más conformes con el bien común y las necesidades de los más débiles [§525]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 144. [Within the footnote:] "Para promover el desarrollo integral del hombre formará a los laicos y los animará a particpar activamente con conciencia cristiana en la técnica y elaboración del progreso"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, *II Conclusiones*, 174.

Chapter 4, footnote 61: "Cumpliendo la misión que les es propria, son enviados como su vanguardia, en medio de la vida del mundo, para rehacer las estructuras sociales, económicas y políticas, de acuerdo con el plan de Dios [§154]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 73.

Chapter 4, footnote 63: "Tomar conciencia de los graves problemas sociales de vastos sectores del pueblo en que vivimos"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, *II Conclusiones*, 185.

Chapter 4, footnote 64: "Se pide al sacerdote de hoy saber interpretar habitualmente, a la luz de la fe, las situaciones y exigencias de la comunidad . . . [desde que] la pastoral latinoamericana se halla comprometida en la promoción humana, a fin de que cada hombre se realice a sí mismo y goce de los bienes de la naturaleza"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, *II Conclusiones*, 197.

Chapter 4, footnote 65: "Esté presente en la vida y las tareas temporales, reflejando la luz de Cristo, presente en la construcción del mundo . . . cuando se dispone orgánicamente la economía y el poder en beneficio de la comunidad"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, *II Conclusiones*, 213.

Chapter 4, footnote 66: "No solamente será una institución de beneficencia, sino que debe insertarse de modo más operante en el proceso de desarrollo de América Latina, como una institución verdaderamente promotora"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, *II Conclusiones*, 61.

Chapter 4, footnote 67: "El anuncio fiel y la denuncia profética [§338]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 113.

Chapter 4, footnote 68: "Exigimos para la Iglesia el derecho de dar testimonio de su mensaje y de usar su palabra profética de anuncio y denuncia en sentido evangélico, en la corrección de las imágenes falsas de la sociedad, incompatibles con la visión cristiana [§1213]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 250.

Chapter 4, footnote 69: "La iglesia, experta en humanidad [§1268] . . . frente a la situación de pecado surge por parte de la iglesia, el deber de denuncia que tiene que ser objetiva, valiente, y evangélica [§1269]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 258.

Chapter 4, footnote 70: "Los constructores de la sociedad . . . el puente de contacto y diálogo con los constructores de la sociedad temporal, a fin de iluminarlos con la visión cristiana . . . la elaboración de una ética social capaz de formular las respuestas cristianas a los grandes problemas de la cultura contemporánea [§§1226, 1227]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 251-52.

Chapter 4, footnote 71: "Los excedentes económicos, los ahorros provenientes del desarme y cualquiera otra riqueza sobre la que, aún a nivel internacional, pesa la 'hipoteca social,' deberán ser utilizados socialmente [§1281]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 260.

Chapter 4, footnote 72: "La iglesia . . . tiene que ejercer una acción de servicio . . . [y] debe crear . . . una conciencia ética en torno a los grandes problemas internacionales [§1283]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 260.

Chapter 4, footnote 73: "Denunciando las situaciones de pecado, llamando a la conversión y comprometiendo a los creyentes en la acción transformadora del mundo [§1305]. . . . Es necesario crear en el hombre latinoamericano una sana conciencia moral, sentido evangélico crítico frente a la realidad, espíritu comunitario y compromiso social. Todo ello hará posible . . . la construcción de la nueva sociedad verdaderamente humana y penetrada de valores evangélicos [§1308]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 267.

Chapter 4, footnote 78: "La iglesia, experta en humanidad [§1268]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 258.

Chapter 4, footnote 81: "[Una] responsabilidad común, frente a un desafío que exige la participación de todos [§1220]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 251.

Chapter 4, footnote 85: "Que se presente cada vez más nítido en Latinoamérica el rostro de una Iglesia auténticamente pobre, misionera y pascual, desligada de todo poder temporal y audazmente comprometida en la liberación de todo el hombre y de todos los hombres"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, *II Conclusiones*, 108.

Chapter 4, footnote 89: [Within the footnote:] "La mejor orientación consistiría en la educación de nuestro pueblo para que con sus contribuciones mantenga a su Iglesia y sus obras, de modo que Ella puede ir desprendiéndose de las actuales condiciones que la obligan a vivir de posisiones [*sic*] y créditos que crean la imagen de ser una Iglesia rica"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia, I Ponencias*, 243-44.

Chapter 4, footnote 90: "La Iglesia de América Latina se siente hoy llamada a dar un testimonio particular de pobreza. . . . Experimenta, por eso, la necesidad de verse libre Ella misma de ataduras temporales que la comprometen, desprendida de bienes innecesarios que la paralizan"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia, I Ponencias*, 114.

Chapter 4, footnote 91: "Una Iglesia burocrática, de una Iglesia cuyos grandes edificios implican poder y riqueza, de una Iglesia comprometida con las estructuras profanas de una sociedad dominada por poderes oligárquicos, de una Iglesia sumida en el inmovilismo"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia, I Ponencias*, 234.

Chapter 4, footnote 92: "La pobreza evangélica" . . . [Within the footnote:] "Una de las características indispensables de la espiritualidad sacerdotal"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, *II Conclusiones*, 176.

Chapter 4, footnote 93: "La sencillez evangélica . . . logren ser en el mundo contemporáneo eficientes estructuras de apostolado y de conquista de los corazones para la Fe y la caridad de Cristo"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia, I Ponencias*, 243.

Chapter 4, footnote 94: [Within the footnote:] "La pobreza de la Iglesia y de sus miembros en América Latina debe ser signo y compromiso . . . compromiso de solidaridad con los que sufren"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, *II Conclusiones*, 210.

Chapter 4, footnote 95: "Se compromete ella misma en la pobreza material. . . . Todos los miembros de la Iglesia están llamados a vivir la pobreza evangélica"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, *II Conclusiones*, 209.

Chapter 4, footnote 96: "La Iglesia de América Latina, dadas las condiciones de pobreza y de subdesarrollo del continente, experimenta la urgencia de traducir ese espíritu de pobreza en gestos, actitudes y normas que la hagan un signo más lúcido y auténtico de su Señor. . . . La situación presente exige, pues, de obispos, sacerdotes, religiosos y laicos, el espíritu de pobreza que "rompiendo las ataduras de la posesión egoísta de los bienes temporales, estimula al cristiano a disponer orgánicamente la economía y el poder en beneficio de la comunidad"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, *II Conclusiones*, 209-210. [Within the footnote:] "Con su testimonio son una denuncia evangélica de quienes sirven al dinero y al poder, reservándose egoístamente para sí los bienes que Dios otorga al hombre para beneficio de toda la comunidad [§747]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 182.

Chapter 4, footnote 97: "Sin duda, actualmente hay más sencillez y pobreza en su forma de vida [§114]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 68.

Chapter 4, footnote 98: "La comunicación y participación de los bienes materiales y espirituales [§1150]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 241.

Chapter 4, footnote 99: "El compromiso del laicado en lo temporal, tan necesario para el cambio de estructuras ha sido insuficiente [§125]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 69.

Chapter 4, footnote 100: "Sin duda las situaciones de injusticia y de pobreza aguda son un índice acusador de que la fe no ha tenido la fuerza necesaria para penetrar los criterios y las decisiones de los sectores responsables del liderazgo ideológico y de la organización de la convivencia social y económica de nuestros pueblos. . . . estructuras generadoras de injusticia . . . nacen de las ideologías de culturas dominantes y son incoherentes con la fe propia de nuestra cultura popular [§437]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 129.

Chapter 4, footnote 101: "La riqueza absolutizada es obstáculo para la verdadera libertad. Los crueles contrastes de lujo y extrema pobreza . . . manifiestan hasta qué punto nuestros países se encuentran bajo el dominio del ídolo de la riqueza [§494]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 140.

Chapter 4, footnote 102: "El pecado corrompe el uso que los hombres hacen del poder [§500]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 141.

Chapter 4, footnote 103: "Debemos agudizar la conciencia del deber de solidaridad con los pobres . . . Esto ha de concretarse en la denuncia de la injusticia y la opresión, en la lucha cristiana contra la intolerable situación que soporta con frecuencia el pobre, en la disposición al diálogo con los grupos responsables de esa situación para hacerles comprender sus obligaciones"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, *II Conclusiones*, 211. [Within the footnote:] "Es evidente que en la realidad latinoamericana hay una 'situación de pecado' que debe ser transformada en realidad de justicia y santidad. . . . Todos los hombres y todos los pueblos deben sentirse solidariamente culpables, comprometerse a vencer el pecado en sí mismos, luchar por la liberación de sus consecuencias (el hambre y la miseria, las enfermedades, la opresión y la ignorancia)"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia, I Ponencias*, 106.

Chapter 4, footnote 104: "La actitud del cristiano debe ser la del que usa de los bienes de este mundo (cuyas estructuras son transitorias) sin absolutizarlas, pues son solo medios para llegar al Reino [§1148]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 241.

Chapter 4, footnote 105: "El avance económico significativo que ha experimentado el continente demuestra que sería posible desarraigar la extrema pobreza y mejorar la calidad de vida de nuestro pueblo; se esto es posible, es, entonces, una obligación [§21]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 55.

Chapter 4, footnote 106: [Within the footnote:] "La Iglesia . . . profesa que todo atropello a la dignidad del hombre es atropello al mismo Dios, de quien es imagen [§306]. . . . Es grave obligación nuestra proclamar . . . la dignidad que a todos, sin distinción alguna les es propria . . . [y profesar] que toda vida humana merece por sí misma, en cualquier circunstancia, su dignificación; que toda convivencia humana tiene que fundarse en el bien común, consistente en la realización cada vez más fraterna de la común dignidad [§316, 317]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 105, 108.

Chapter 4, footnote 107: "Una *fidelidad personal*, una respuesta gozosa y total a un llamamiento divino"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia, I Ponencias*, 110.

Chapter 4, footnote 113: "La apertura pastoral de las obras y la opción preferencial por los pobres es la tendencia más notable de la vida religiosa latinoamericana. De hecho, cada vez más, los religiosos se encuentran en zonas marginadas y difíciles, en misiones entre indígenas, en labor callada y humilde. Esta opción no supone exclusión de nadie, pero sí una preferencia y un acercamiento al pobre [§733]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 180.

Chapter 4, footnote 114: [Within the footnote:] "El testimonio de una Iglesia pobre puede evangelizar a los ricos que tienen su corazón apegado a las riquezas, convirtiéndolos y liberándolos de esta esclavitud y de su egoísmo [§1156]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 242.

Chapter 4, footnote 118: "La Iglesia discierne una situación de pecado social, de gravedad tanto mayor por darse en países que se llaman católicos y que tienen la capacidad de cambiar [§28]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 56.

Chapter 4, footnote 119: [Within the footnote:] "Nuestra misión pastoral es esencialmente un sevicio de inspiración y de educación de las conciencias de los creyentes, para ayudarles a percibir las responsabilidades de su fe, en su vida personal y en su vida social"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, *II Conclusiones*, 54.

Chapter 4, footnote 120: "La Iglesia . . . ha de denunciar claramente los males existentes . . . Pero a la palabra ha de seguir la acción"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia, I Ponencias*, 98. [Within the footnote:] "La fe del convertido no se reduce a una adhesión a las verdades dogmáticas reveladas y propuestas por la Iglesia, a una especie de firma al pie del credo: es un cambio de vida, un cambio de mentalidad, un acontecimiento que abarca la totalidad de su ser, un encuentro personal con Cristo"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia, I Ponencias*, 162-63.

Chapter 4, footnote 121: "Con todo, la comunión y participación verdaderas sólo pueden existir en esta vida proyectadas sobre el plano muy concreto de las realidades temporales . . . no se puede hoy en América Latina amar de veras al hermano y por lo tanto a Dios, sin comprometerse a nivel personal y en muchos casos, incluso, a nivel de estructuras, con el servicio y la promoción de los grupos humanos y de los estratos sociales más desposeídos y humillados, con todas las consecuencias que se siguen en el plano de esas realidades temporales [§327]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 110.

Chapter 4, footnote 123: [Within the footnote:] "La evangelización busca . . . suscitando una conversión que pueda ser base y garantía de la transformación de las estructuras y del ambiente social [§388]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 120.

Chapter 4, footnote 124: "La originalidad del mensaje cristiano no consiste directamente en la afirmación de la necesidad de un cambio de estructuras, sino en la insistencia en la conversión del hombre, que exige luego este cambio. No tendremos un continente nuevo sin nuevas y renovadas estructuras; sobre todo, no habrá continente nuevo sin hombres nuevos, que a la luz del Evangelio sepan ser verdaderamente libres y responsables"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, *II Conclusiones*, 52.

Chapter 4, footnote 125: "El cambio necesario de las estructuras sociales, políticas y económicas injustas no será verdadero y pleno si no va acompañado por el cambio de mentalidad personal y colectiva respecto al ideal de una vida humana digna y feliz que a su vez dispone a la conversión [§1155]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 242.

Chapter 4, footnote 126: "Antes del cambio de estructuras es necesario el cambio de mentalidad. Para que pueda ser verdaderamente radical el cambio de estructuras, es

menester que haya antes un cambio de mentalidad. Y mejor que un cambio de mentalidad, un cambio del corazón, una profunda y continuada conversión de todo el hombre, una renovación del espíritu"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia, I Ponencias*, 257. [Within the footnote:] "El hombre evangelizado *se convierte* primero *en un creyente que rompe interiormente* su relación absoluta con un mundo humano y se religa personal y totalmente con Dios"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia, I Ponencias*, 151.

Chapter 4, footnote 133: "Los pobres no podrán ser evangelizados si nosotros somos latifundistas [large landowners]; los débiles y oprimidos se alejarán de Cristo, si nosotros aparecemos aliados con los poderosos"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia, I Ponencias*, 166-67.} [Within the footnote:] "La Iglesia requiere ser cada día más independiente de los poderes del mundo [§144]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 71.

Chapter 4, footnote 134: "Tenemos conciencia de que la transformación de estructuras es una expresión externa de la conversión interior. Sabemos que esta conversión empieza por nosotros mismos. Sin el testimonio de una Iglesia convertida serían vanas nuestras palabras de pastores [§1221]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 251.

Chapter 4, footnote 135: "La participación en la liturgia no incide adecuadamente el compromiso social de los cristianos. La instrumentalización , que a veces se hace de la misma, desfigura su valor evangelizador [§902]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 204.

Chapter 4, footnote 136: "Ejemplos auténticos de desprendimiento y libertad de espíritu, harán que los demás miembros del Pueblo de Dios den testimonio análogo de pobreza . . . una sincera conversión ha de cambiar la mentalidad individualista en otra de sentido social y preocupación por el bien común"; CELAM II [Medellín], *La Iglesia*, *II Conclusiones*, 212-13.

Chapter 4, footnote 137: "La penetración por el Evangelio, de los valores y criterios que la [la cultura] inspiran, la conversión de los hombres que viven según esos valores y el cambio que, para ser más plenamente humanas, requieren las estructuras en que aquellos viven y se expresan [§395]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 122.

Chapter 4, footnote 138: "La Iglesia llama, pues, a una renovada conversión en el plano de los valores culturales, para que desde allí se impregnen las estructuras de convivencia con espíritu evangélico. Al llamar a una revitalización de los valores evangélicos, urge a una rápida y profunda transformación de las estructuras, ya que éstas están llamadas, por su misma naturaleza, a contener el mal que nace del corazón del hombre, y que se manifiesta también en forma social y a servir como condiciones pedagógicas para una conversión interior, en el plano de los valores [§438]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 129.

Chapter 4, footnote 139: "No todos en la Iglesia in América Latina nos hemos comprometido suficientemente con los pobres; no siempre nos preocupamos por ellos y somos solidarios con ellos. Su servicio exige, en efecto, una conversión y purificación constantes, en todos los cristianos, para el logro de una identificación cada día más plena con Cristo pobre y con los pobres [§1140]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 239.

Chapter 4, footnote 140: "El compromiso con los pobres y los oprimidos y el surgimiento de las Comunidades de Base han ayudado a la Iglesia a descubrir el potencial evangelizador de los pobres, en cuanto la interpelan constantemente, llamándola a la conversión [§1147]"; CELAM III [Puebla], *La Evangelización*, 240.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alberigo, Giuseppe and Joseph A. Komonchak, ed. *History of Vatican II*. Vol. 2, *Formation of the Council's Identity: First Period and Intercession, October 1962 – September 1963*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995.

Allsopp, Michael E. and John J. O'Keefe, ed. *"Veritatis Splendor": American Responses*. Kansas City, MO: Sheed & Ward, 1995.

Arendt, Hannah. *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. New York, NY: Viking Press, 1963.

_____. *The Life of the Mind*. New York, NY: Harcourt, 1978.

_____. *Responsibility and Judgment.* Edited and with an introduction by Jerome Kahn. New York, NY: Schocken Books, 2003.

Arns, Paulo Evaristo Cardinal. "Social Sin." Written intervention, 1983 Synod of Bishops. *L'Osservatore Romano*, Oct 31, 1983: 14.

Ashley, Benedict. "The Development of Doctrine about Sin, Conversion and the Following of Christ." In *Moral Theology Today: Certitudes and Doubts*, ed. Donald G. McCarthy, 46-63. St. Louis, MO: The Pope John Center, 1984.

Augustine, St. *The City of God*. Translated by Marcus Dods. New York, NY: Modern Library, 1950.

Babcock, William S. "Augustine on Sin and Moral Agency." *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 16:1 (Spr 1988): 28-55.

Bandura, Albert. "Exercise of Human Agency Through Collective Efficacy." *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 9:3(June 2000): 75-78.

_____. "Mechanisms of Moral Disengagement in Support of Military Force: the Impact of Sept. 11." *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology* 25:2 (2006): 141-65.

_____. "Selective Moral Disengagement in the Exercise of Moral Agency." *Journal of Moral Education* 31:2 (2002): 101-19.

Baum, Gregory. "Class Struggle and the Magisterium: A New Note." *Theological Studies* 45 (1984): 690-701.

_____. *Compassion and Solidarity: The Church for Others.* New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1990.

_____. "The Creed That Liberates." *Horizons* 13 (Spr 1986): 136-49.

_____. "Critical Theology." In *Conversion: Perspectives on Personal and Social Transformation*, ed. Walter E. Conn, 281-95. New York, NY: Alba House, 1978.

_____. "Does Morality Need (Call for?) the Church?" In *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America* 25 (1971): 159-73.

_____. *Essays in Critical Theology.* Kansas City, MO: Sheed & Ward, 1994.

_____. "Faith and Liberation: Development Since Vatican II." In *Vatican II — Open Questions and New Horizons*, ed. Gerald M. Fagin, 75-104. Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1984.

_____. *Man Becoming: God in Secular Language.* New York, NY: Herder and Herder, 1970.

_____. "Option for the Powerless." *The Ecumenist* 26 (Nov-Dec 1987): 5-11.

_____. "Political Theology in Conflict." *The Ecumenist* 22 (Sep-Oct 1984): 84-87.

_____. "The Preferential Option for the Poor." In *Amazing Church: A Catholic Theologian Remembers a Half-Century of Change*, 53-82. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005.

_____. *The Priority of Labor.* New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1975.

_____. "Ratzinger Explains How Condemnation Was Right Then, Wrong Now." *National Catholic Reporter* January 25, 2002: 18.

_____. *Religion and Alienation: A Theological Reading of Sociology.* New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1975.

_____. "Replies to David Hollenbach." *Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics* 7 (1987): 41-46.

_____. *The Social Imperative: Essays on the Critical Issues That Confront the Christian Churches.* New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1979.

_____. "The Sociology of Roman Catholic Theology." In *Sociology and Theology: Alliance and Conflict*, ed. D. Martin, et al., 120-35. London: Harvest Press, 1980.

_____. "Structures of Sin." In *The Logic of Solidarity: Commentaries on Pope John Paul II's Encyclical, "On Social Concern"*, ed. Gregory Baum and Robert Ellsberg, 110-26. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989.

_____. *Theology and Society*. New York, NY : Paulist Press, 1987.

Bocchiaro, Piero and Philip G. Zimbardo. "Defying Unjust Authority: An Exploratory Study." *Current Psychology* 29 (2010): 155-170.

Boff, Leonardo. *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community*. Translated by Phillip Berryman. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001.

_____. "Trinitarian Community and Social Liberation." *Cross Currents* 38:3 (Fall 1988): 289-308.

_____. *Trinity and Society*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988.

Boff, Leonardo and Virgil Elizondo, ed. *Option for the Poor: Challenge to the Rich Countries*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, LTD., 1986.

Bernardin, Archbishop Joseph L. "America's Social Sin." *Commonweal* 109 (Sep 24, 1982): 489-92.

Bonner, Gerald. "Augustine's Doctrine of Man: Image of God and Sinner." In *Doctrines of Human Nature, Sin, and Salvation in the Early Church*, ed. Everett Ferguson, vol. 10, *Studies in Early Christianity: A Collection of Scholarly Essays*, 71-90. New York, NY: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1993.

Boyle, Joseph, Jr. "Freedom, the Human Person and Human Action." In *Principles of Catholic Morality*, ed. William E. May, 237-66. Chicago, IL: Franciscan Herald Press, 1980.

Brown, Robert McAfee. *Gustavo Gutiérrez: An Introduction to Liberation Theology*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990.

_____. *Theology in a New Key: Responding to Liberation Themes*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978.

Buckley, Francis, S.J. "Sin, Penance, and Reconciliation in the Postconciliar Church." In *The Church in the Nineties*, ed. Pierre M. Hegy, 207-19. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1993.

Burke, Margaret Ellen. "Social Sin and Social Grace." *The Way Supplement* 85 (Spr 1996): 40-54.

Byrne, Patrick H. "Ressentiment and the Preferential Option for the Poor." *Theologic al Studies* 54:2 (June 1993): 213-29.

Calhoun, Cheshire. Review of *Sharing Responsibility*, by Larry May. *Ethics* 104:4 (July 1994): 890-93.

Câmara, Dom Hélder Pessôa. "CELAM: History is Implacable." *Cross Currents* 28:1 (Spr 1978): 55-59.

Carney, Martin Francis. "An Analysis of Gregory Baum's Theology of the 'Preferential Option for the Poor' as a Via Negativa which Addresses Important Critiques of the Preferential Option." Ph.D. diss., Fordham University, 2001.

Causey, Margaret. "An Analysis of the Relationship Between Personal and Social Sin Within the Development of Gregory Baum's Theology." Ph.D. diss., Marquette University, 1995.

Cavanaugh, William T. *Torture and Eucharist: Theology, Politics, and the Body of Christ*. Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, Inc., 1998.

CELAM, Fourth General Conference of Latin American Bishops [Santo Domingo]. "Message of the Fourth General Conference to the Peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean." In *Santo Domingo and Beyond*, ed. Alfred T. Hennelly, S.J., 63-70. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993.

CELAM, Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops [Medellín]. *Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops. The Church in the Present-Day Transformation of Latin America in Light of the Council.* Vol. 1*, Position Papers.* Vol. 2, *Conclusions*, ed. Louis M. Colonnese. Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1968.

CELAM, Segunda Conferencia General del Episcopado Latinoamericano [Medellín]. *La Iglesia en la Actual Transformación de América Latina a la Luz del Concilio. I Ponencias.* Edición Oficial del Secretariado General del CELAM. Santiago, Chile: Ediciones Paulinas, 1968.

CELAM, Segunda Conferencia General del Episcopado Latinoamericano [Medellín]. *La Iglesia en la Actual Transformation de América Latina a la Luz del Concilio. II Conclusiones*. Edición Oficial del Secretariado General del CELAM. Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1968.

CELAM, III Conferencia General del Episcopado Latinoamericano [Puebla]. *La Evangelización en el presente y en el futuro de América Latina. Documento de Puebla*. Bogotá, Colombia: Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano, 1979.

CELAM, Third General Conference of Latin American Bishops [Puebla]. *Evangelization at Present and in the Future of Latin America. Final Document of the Third General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate* (Puebla de los Ángeles, Mexico. 27 Jan - 13 Feb 1979). Washington, DC: National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1979.

CELAM, *CELAM III: Third General Conference of the Latin American Bishops, Puebla, Mexico, January 27 to February 13, 1979*, ed. Helen Volkomener ["Note: This is an UNOFFICIAL Translation done by volunteers on the last days of the Conference"]. Notre Dame, IN: Catholic Committee on Urban Ministry, University of Notre Dame, 1979.

Chenu, Marie Dominique. "Vatican II and the Church of the Poor." *Concilium* 104, *The Poor and the Church,* ed. Norbert Greinacher and Alois Müller (April 1977): 56-61.

Cleary, Edward L., ed. *Born of the Poor: The Latin American Church Since Medellín*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990.

Coffey, David. "Rahner's Theology of Fundamental Option." *Philosophy & Theology* 10:1 (1997): 255-84.

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Instruction on Certain Aspects of the "Theology of Liberation"* [*Libertatis nuntius*]. Vatican translation. Boston, MA: St. Paul Books & Media, 1984.

_____. *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation* [*Libertatis conscientia*] (1986). Available from Vatican: the Holy See [Official Web Site of the Holy See], http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19860322_freedom-liberation_en.html.

Conn, Walter E. *Christian Conversion: A Developmental Interpretation of Autonomy and Surrender*. New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1986.

_____. *Conscience: Development and Self-Transcendence*. Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1981.

Connell, Francis J. *Outlines of Moral Theology*. Milwaukee, WI: Bruce Publishing Company, 1953.

Connolly, Hugh. *Sin*. London: Continuum, 2002.

Cooper, Eugene J. "The Fundamental Option." *Irish Theological Quarterly* 34:4 (1972): 383-392.

_____. "A Newer Look at the Theology of Sin." *Louvain Studies* 4 (1971): 259-307.

_____. "The Notion of Sin in Light of the Theory of the Fundamental Option: The Fundamental Option Revisited." *Louvain Studies* 9 (Fall 1983): 363-82.

Cosgrave, William. "Basic Choice and Basic Stance—Explaining the Fundamental Option." *The Furrow* 35 (Aug 1984): 508-18.

Coventry, John. "Sixteenth and Twentieth-Century Theologies of Sin." *Way Supplement* 48 (Fall 1983): 29-39.

Cox, Harvey Gallagher. *The Silencing of Leonardo Boff: The Vatican and the Future of World Christianity*. Oak Park, IL: Meyer-Stone Books, 1988.

Cross, James Thomas. "Post-Conciliar Models of Sin and Reconciliation: Towards a Contemporary Paradigm." Ph.D. diss., Duquesne University, 2003.

Cunningham, Agnes. "The Greek Fathers: An Alternative to St. Augustine." *Chicago Studies* 21 (Aut 1982): 239-53.

Curran, Charles E. "The Changing Anthropological Bases of Catholic Social Ethics." *The Thomist* 45:2 (1981): 284-318.

_____. *Directions in Fundamental Moral Theology*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985.

_____. *A New Look at Christian Morality; Christian Morality Today, II*. Notre Dame, IN: Fides, 1968.

_____. "The Person as Moral Agent and Subject in the Light of Contemporary Christology." In *Called to Love: Towards a Contemporary Christian Ethic*, ed. Francis A. Eigo, 21-46. Philadelphia, PA: Villanova University Press, 1985.

_____. "*Veritatis splendor* and Contemporary Catholic Moral Theology." In *Open Catholicism. The Tradition at Its Best: Essays in Honor of Gerard S. Sloyen*, ed. David Efroymson and John Raines, 129-50. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1997.

Curran, Charles E., ed. *Conscience: Readings in Moral Theology No. 14*. New York, NY: Paulist Press, 2004.

Curran, Charles E. and Richard A. McCormick, ed. *The Distinctiveness of Christian Ethics: Readings in Moral Theology No. 2*. New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1980.

Dallen, James. "Reconciliation in the Sacrament of Penance." *Worship* 64 (1990): 386-405.

_____. *The Reconciling Community: The Rite of Penance.* Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1986.

D'Arcy, Eric. *Human Acts: An Essay in Their Moral Evaluation*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963.

Donagan, Alan. *The Theory of Morality*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977.

Donahue, James A. "Ethics and Institutions: A Review Essay." *Religious Studies Review* 17:1 (Jan 1991): 24-32.

Doolan, Gregory. "The Relation of Culture and Ignorance to Culpability in Thomas Aquinas." *The Thonmist* 63 (1999): 105-24.

Dooley, Catherine. "The 1983 Synod of Bishops and the 'Crisis of Confession.'" *The Fate of Confession*, ed. Mary Collins and David N. Power (1987): 11-20. *Concilium* 190. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, Ltd, 1987.

Dorr, Donal. *Option for the Poor: A Hundred Years of Vatican Social Teaching.* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983.

_____. *Spirituality and Justice*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1984.

D'Souza, Archbishop Henry. "Structural Sin and Injustice." *Origins* 13:21 (3 Nov 1983): 365-66.

Dubarle, A. M. *The Biblical Doctrine of Original Sin*. New York, NY: Herder, 1964.

Dussel, Enrique. "An Analysis of the Final Document at Puebla: The Relationship between Economics and Christian Ethics." *Concilium* 140, ed. Dietmar Mieth and Jacques Pohier (1980): 101-109.

_____. "Exodus as a Paradigm in Liberation Theology." Translated by Francis McDonagh. *Concilium* 189, *Exodus—A Lasting Paradigm,* ed. Bas van Iersel and Anton Weiler (1987): 83-91.

Dych, William. *The Faith That Does Justice: Examining the Christian Sources for Social Change*. Woodstock Studies 2. New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1977.

Eagleson, John and Philip Scharper, ed. *Puebla and Beyond: Documentation and Commentary*. Translated by John Drury. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979.

Ecclesiastical History Society. *The Church and Wealth: Papers Read at the 1986 Summer Meeting and the 197 Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, ed. W. J. Sheils and Diana Wood. New York, NY: B. Blackwell, 1987.

Fagan, Seán, S.M, *Has Sin Changed?* Dublin, Ireland: Gill and Macmillan Ltd., 1978.

Farrell, Walter. *A Companion to the Summa*, Vol. 1, Part 2. New York, NY: Sheed & Ward, 1974.

Favazza, Joseph. *The Order of Penitents*, foreword by James Lopresti. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1988.

Fenn, Richard K. "Sin and Guilt in Modern Societies: A Sociological Commentary." *Princeton Seminary Bulletin*, 7:1 (Fall 1986): 25-39.

Fernandes, Angelo. "A Perspective for the Synod." *Origins* 13:21 (3 Nov 1983): 363-5.

Fischer, John Martin, ed. *Moral Responsibility*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986.

Flannery, Austin, O.P., ed. *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents, Study Edition*. Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Company, 1987.

Ford, S. Dennis. *Sins of Omission: A Primer on Moral Indifference*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990.

Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy for the Oppressed*. New York, NY: Herder and Herder, 1970.

Fry, Karin A., *Arendt: A Guide for the Perplexed*. New York, NY: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2009.

Fuchs, Josef, S.J. "Good Acts and Good Persons." In *Considering Veritatis splendor*, ed. John Wilkins, 21-26. Cleveland : Pilgrim Press, 1994.

_____. *Moral Demands and Person Obligations*. Translated by Brian McNeil. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1993.

_____. "The 'Sin of the World' and Normative Morality." *Gregorian* 61:1 (1980): 51-75.

Gaffney, James. *Newness of Life : A Modern Introduction to Catholic Ethics*. New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1979.

_____. "On Parenesis and Fundamental Moral Theology." *Journal of Religious Ethics* 11 (Spr 1983): 23-34.

_____. *Sin Reconsidered*. New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1983.

Galilea, Segundo. "Between Medellín and Puebla." *Cross Currents* 28:1 (Spr 1978): 71-78.

Gauthier, Paul. *Jésus, l'Église et les pauvres: Réflexions nazaréennes pour le Concile*. Paris: Éditions Universitaires, 1963.

Geddes, Jennifer L. "Banal Evil and Useless Knowledge: Hannah Arendt and Charlotte Delbo on Evil after the Holocaust." In *The Double Binds of Ethics after the Holocaust: Salvaging the Fragments*, ed. Jennifer L. Geddes, et al., 119-32. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

Gelin, Albert. *The Poor of Yahweh*. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1964.

Gelin, Albert and Albert Descamps. *Sin in the Bible*. New York, NY: Desclée Company, 1964.

Gilbert, Margaret. *On Social Facts*. London: Routledge Press, 1989.

_____. *Sociality and Responsibility: New Essays in Plural Subject Theory*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000.

González, Justo. "The Option for the Poor in Latin American Liberation Theology." In *Poverty and Ecclesiology*, ed. Anthony Dunnavant, 9-26. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992.

Gorman, Rosemarie E. "The Contributions of Gustavo Gutiérrez and Juan Luis Segundo to a Theology of Social Sin." Ph.D. diss., The Catholic University of America, 1996.

Greeley, Dolores, R.S.M. "St. John Chrysostom: Prophet of Social Justice." In *Studia Patristica Vol. XVII in Three Parts*, ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone, Part Three, 1163-68. New York, NY: Pergamon Press, 1982.

Gremillion, Joseph. *The Gospel of Peace and Justice*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1976.

Grisez, Germain and Russell Shaw. *Fulfillment in Christ: A Summary of Christian Moral Principles.* Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991.

Gula, Richard M., S.S. *Reason Informed by Faith: Foundations of Catholic Morality*. New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1989.

Gutiérrez, Gustavo. "The Church and the Poor: A Latin American Perspective." Translated by Matthew J. O'Connell in *The Reception of Vatican II*, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo, Jean-Pierre Jossua, and Joseph Komonchak, 171-193. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1987.

_____. "Liberation and Development." *Cross Currents* 21:3 (Sum 1971): 243-56.

_____. *On Job: God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent*. Translated by J. J. O'Connell. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988.

_____. "Option for the Poor: Assessment and Implications." Translated by Heidi Epstein. *ARC, the Journal of the Faculty of Religious Studies McGill University* 22 (1994): 61-71.

_____. "Preferential Option for the Poor." *Sedos Bulletin* 24 (1992): xxx.

_____. *The Power of the Poor in History*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983.

_____. "Significado y alcance de Medellín." In *Irrupción y Caminar de la Iglesia de los Pobres*, 23-73. Lima: Instituto Bartolomé de las Casas, 1989.

_____. *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*. Revised Edition with a New Introduction. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988.

_____. *The Truth Shall Make You Free*. Translated by Matthew O'Connell. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990.

Haight, Roger. *An Alternative Vision. An Interpretation of Liberation Theology*. New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1985.

_____. *The Experience and Language of Grace*. New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1979.

_____. "Gregory Baum as Theologian." *Theology Journal of Toronto* 3:2 (1987): 181-84.

_____. "Sin and Grace." In *Systematic Theology*, Vol. II, ed. Francis Schüssler Fiorenza and John Galvin, 77-141. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991.

Happel, Stephen and James J. Walter. *Conversion and Discipleship: A Christian Foundation for Ethics and Doctrine*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986.

Häring, Bernard. *Free and Faithful in Christ: Moral Theology for Clergy and Laity*, I: *General Moral Theology*. New York, NY: The Seabury Press, 1978.

_____. *Sin in the Secular Age*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974.

Hellwig, Monika K. *The Eucharist and the Hunger of the World*. New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1976.

_____. *Sign of Reconciliation and Conversion*. Second Edition. Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1984.

Hengel, Martin. *Property and Riches in the Early Church: Aspects of a Social History of Early Christianity*. Translated by John Bowden. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974.

Hennelly, Alfred T., S.J., ed. *Liberation Theology: A Documentary History*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990.

Hennelly, Alfred T., S.J. "Courage with Primitive Weapons." *Cross Currents* 28:1 (Spr 1978): 8-19.

_____. *Liberating Theologies*. Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1995.

_____. *Theology for a Liberating Church*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1989.

Henriot, Peter J. "The Concept of Social Sin." *Catholic Mind* 71 (Oct 1973): 38-53.

_____. *Opting for the Poor*. Washington, DC: Center of Concern, 1990.

_____. "Social Sin and Conversion: A Theology of the Church's Social Involvement." *Chicago Studies* 11 (Sum 1972): 115-30.

_____. "Social Sin: The Recovery of a Christian Tradition." In *Method in Ministry: Theological Reflection and Christian Ministry*, ed. James D. Whitehead and Evelyn Eaton Whitehead, 127-144. New York, NY: The Seabury Press, 1980.

Heschel, Abraham Joshua. *God in Search of Man: A Philosophy of Judaism*. New York, NY: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1956.

_____. *The Sabbath.* New York: Noonday Press, 1975.

Hilkert, Mary Catherine, O.P., Susan A. Ross and Elizabeth A. Johnson. "Current Theology: Feminist Theology: A Review of Literature." *Theological Studies* 56 (1995): 327-52.

Himes, Kenneth R. "Social Sin and the Role of the Individual." In *The Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics*, ed. Alan B. Anderson, 183-218. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1987.

Hinze, Bradford E. "Pope John Paul II on Collective Repentance." In *The Ecumenist: A Journal for Promoting Christian Unity* 3:3 (Jul-Sep 1996), 49-53.

Hug, James E. "Social Sin, Cultural Healing." *Chicago Studies* 23 (Nov 1984): 333-51.

Imhof, Paul and Hubert Biallowons, ed. *Faith in a Wintry Season: Conversations and Interviews with Karl Rahner in the Last Years of His Life*. New York, NY: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1990.

International Theological Commission. "Human Development and Christian Salvation." *Origins* 7 (3 November 1977): 305-13.

_____. "Reconciliation and Penance." *Irish Theological Quarterly* 51:3 (1985): 169-92.

Jackson, Timothy P. "The Gospels and Christian Ethics." In *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Ethics*, ed. Robin Gill, 42-62. Cambridge: University Press, 2001.

Jensen, Joseph, O.S.B. *God's Word to Israel*. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1988.

Jesreel, Jack. "Why the Preferential Option for the Poor Is Not Optional." *U.S. Catholic* 62:11 (November 1997): 30-35.

John XXIII, Pope. *Radio message to all the Christian faithful one month before the opening of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council (September 11, 1962).* Available from Vatican: the Holy See [Official Web Site of the Holy See], http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_xxiii/speeches/1962/documents/hf_j-xxiii_s pe_19620911_ecumenical-council_it.html.

John Paul II, Pope. *Centesimus annus* (*The Centenary*). Encyclical Letter (May 1, 1991). In *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage*, David J. O'Brien and Thomas A. Shannon, ed., 439-488. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992.

_____. "Christ Is the Same Today and Forever." General Audience, 21 October 1992. *L'Osservatore Romano* n.43 (October 28, 1992), 11.

_____. *On Social Concern* (*Sollicitudo rei socialis*). Encyclical Letter (December 30, 1987). In *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage*, David J. O'Brien and Thomas A. Shannon, ed., 395-436. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992.

_____. *Reconciliation and Penance: In the Mission of the Church Today* (*Reconciliatio et paenitentia*). Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of His Holiness Pope John Paul II [December 2, 1984]. Vatican Translation. Boston, MA: Pauline Books & Media, 1984.

_____. *The Splendor of Truth: "Veritatis splendor": Encyclical Letter Addressed by the Supreme Pontiff Pope John Paul II to All the Bishops of the Catholic Church Regarding Certain Fundamental Questions of the Church's Moral Teaching.* Boston, MA: St. Paul Books & Media, 1993.

_____. *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* (*The Coming Third Millennium*). Available from Vatican: the Holy See [Official Web Site of the Holy See], http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl _10111994_tertio-millennio-adveniente_en.html

_____. *Ut unum sint. On Commitment to Ecumenism.* Vatican Translation. Boston, MA: Pauline Books & Media, 1995.

Johnson, S. Elizabeth, CSJ. "Christology and Social Justice: John Paul II and the American Bishops." *Chicago Studies* 26 (Aug 1987): 155-65.

Johnstone, Brian V. "Conscience and Error." *Conscience: Readings in Moral Theology No. 14*, ed. Charles E. Curran, 163-74. New York, NY: Paulist Press, 2004.

_____. "The Encyclical Veritatis Splendor." *The Ecumenical Review* 48:2 (Apr 1996): 164-72.

_____. "Erroneous Conscience in *Veritatis Splendor* and the Theological Tradition." In *The Splendor of Accuracy: An Examination of the Assertions Made in Veritatis Splendor*, ed. Joseph A. Selling and Jan Jans, 114-35. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995.

Jones, David H. *Moral Responsibility in the Holocaust: A Study in the Ethics of Character*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999.

Kampowski, Stephan. *Arendt, Augustine, and the New Beginning: The Action Theory and Moral Thought of Hannah Arendt in the Light of Her Dissertation on St. Augustine.* Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008.

Kelsey, David H. "Whatever Happened to the Doctrine of Sin?" *Theology Today* 50 (Jul 1993): 169-78.

Keenan, James F., S.J. "Can a Wrong Action Be Good? The Development of Theological Opinion on Erroneous Conscience." *Église et Théologie* 24:2 (May 1993): 205-19.

Kerans, Patrick. *Sinful Social Structures*. New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1974.

Kirk, Pamela. "The Power of the Poor." *Liturgy: Journal of the Liturgical Conference* 6:2 (Feb 1986): 37-43.

Komonchak, Joseph A. "Review of *Cooperation Between Theologians and the Ecclesiastical Magisterium*: *A Report of Joint Committee of the Canon Law Society of America and the Catholic Theological Society of America*, ed. Leo J. O'Donovan" *The Jurist* 42:2 (1982): 566-68.

LaCugna, Catherine Mowry. "The Trinitarian Mystery of God." In *Systematic Theology*, Vol. I, ed. Francis Schüssler Fiorenza and John P. Galvin. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991.

Lamb, Matthew. *Solidarity with Victims: Toward a Theology of Social Transformation*. New York, NY: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1985.

Lamoureux, Patricia Ann. "The Development and Analysis of Latin American Liberation Ethics." Ph.D. diss., Fordham University, 1994.

Langan, John, S.J. "Personal Responsibility and the Common Good in John Paul II." In *Ethics, Religion and the Good Society*, ed. Joseph Runzo, 132-47. Westminster: John Knox Press, 1992.

LaVerdiere, Eugene. "The Need for Salvation: A New Testament Perspective." *Chicago Studies* 21 (Aut 1982): 227-38.

Levi, Werner. *From Alms to Liberation: The Catholic Church, the Theologians, Poverty, and Politics* . New York, NY: Praeger, 1989.

Libânio, J. B. "Celam III: Fears and Hopes." *Cross Currents* 28:1 (Spr 1978): 20-33.

Limburg, James. *The Prophets and the Powerless*. Atlanta: John Knox, 1977.

Linnane, Brian F., S.J. "Categorical and Transcendental Experience in Rahner's Theology: Implications for Ethics." *Philosophy & Theology* 10:1 (1997): 199-226.

Lohfink, Norbert F., S.J. *Option for the Poor: The Basic Principle of Liberation Theology in the Light of the Bible*. Berkeley, CA: BIBAL Press, 1987.

Lonergan, Bernard. *Method in Theology*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996.

_____. "Theology in Its New Context." In *A Second Collection*, 55-67. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996.

Lorscheider, Aloysius Cardinal. "Advantages of Communal Penance." Written intervention, 1983 Synod of Bishops. *L'Osservatore Romano*, Oct 31, 1983: 16.

Lyonnet, Stanislas and Léopold Sabourin. *Sin, Redemption, and Sacrifice: A Biblical and Patristic Study*. Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1970.

MacEoin, Gary. "The Church of the Poor?" *Cross Currents* 28:1 (Spr 1978): 1-4.

Mahoney, John. *The Making of Moral Theology: A Study of the Roman Catholic Tradition*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987.

Martini, Carlo Maria Cardinal. "Report by Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini on 'Reconciliation and Penance in the Church's Mission.'" *L'Osservatore Romano*, 804, Oct 10, 1983: 4-5.

May, Larry. *The Morality of Groups: Collective Responsibility, Group-Based Harm, and Corporate Rights*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987.

_____. Review of *On Social Facts* by Margaret Gilbert. *Ethics* [volume: issue?] (July 1992): 853-56.

_____. *Sharing Responsibility.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

McCarthy, Dennis J. *Old Testament Covenant: A Survey of Current Opinions*. Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1972.

McCormick, Patrick. *Sin as Addiction*. New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1989.

McCormick, Richard A. *Notes on Moral Theology: 1965 through 1980*. Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1981.

McDermott, Brian. "The Theology of Original Sin: Recent Developments." *Theological Studies* 38 (September 1977): 478-512.

McGrath, Archbishop Mark. "Church Doctrine in Latin America after the Council." In *The Church and Social Change in Latin America*, ed. Henry Landsberger, 97-112. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1970.

McKenna, J. "The Possibility of Social Sin." *Irish Theological Quarterly* 60 (1994): xxx.

Mead, George H. *The Philosophy of the Act*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1938.

Menninger, Karl. *Whatever Became of Sin*. New York, NY: Hawthorn Books, 1973.

Metz, Johannes Baptist. *Faith in History and Society: Toward a Practical Fundamental Theology*. New York, NY: The Seabury Press, 1980.

_____. "Religion and society in the light of a political theology [The Dudleian Lecture]." *Harvard Theological Review* 61:4 (Oct 1968): 507-23.

_____. *Theology of the World*. Translated by William Glen-Doepel. New York, NY: The Seabury Press, 1973.

Miller, Frederick L. "The Fundamental Option in the Thought of St. Augustine." *The Downside Review* 95 (Oct 1977): 271-83.

Miquez Bonino, José. *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975.

Mitchell, Basil. "How is the Concept of Sin Related to the Concept of Moral Wrongdoing." *Religious Studies* 20 (1984): 165-73.

Moeller, Charles. "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. History of the Constitution." In *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Herbert

Vorgrimler. Vol. 5, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*. New York, NY: Herder and Herder, 1969.

Monden, Louis, S.J. *Sin, Liberty and Law*. Translated by Joseph Donceel. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1965.

Moreno, Juan Ramón, S.J. "Church of the Poor." *Review for Religious* 51/4 (Jul-Aug 1992): 486-495.

Moser, Antônio and Bernadino Leers. *Moral Theology: Dead Ends and Alternatives*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books , 1990.

Murphy, Charles M. "Action for Justice as Constitutive of the Preaching of the Gospel: What Did the 1971 Synod Mean?" *Theological Studies* 44 (Jun 1983): 298-311.

Murphy, Nancey. "On the Priority of Personal to Structural Evil in Catholic Social Teaching: A Critique." In *Ethics, Religion and the Good Society*, ed. Joseph Runzo, 148-52. Westminster: John Knox Press, 1992.

Mynatty, Hormis. "The Concept of Social Sin." *Louvain Studies* 16 (1991): 3-26.

_____. "Fundamental Option and the Horizon of Moral Reflection." In *Moral Theology Today: Trends and Issues*, ed. Bosco Puthur, 26-44. Alwaye, Kerala: Pontifical Institute Publications, 1991.

Natanson, Maurice. *The Social Dynamics of George H. Mead*. The Hague, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973.

National Conference of Catholic Bishops [NCCB]. *Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions: Reflections of the U.S. Catholic Bishops*. Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1998.

The New American Bible. South Bend, IN: Greenlawn Press, 1991.

Nichols, Aidan. *The Theology of Joseph Ratzinger: An Introductory Study*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988.

Novak, Michael. "Structures of Virtue, Structures of Sin: A Theology of Natural Liberty." *America* 160:3 (Jan 28, 1989): 54-60.

O'Brien, David J. and Thomas A. Shannon, ed. *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage.* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992.

O'Brien, John. *Theology and the Option for the Poor*. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992.

O'Connell, Timothy E. "Conscience." In *Principles for a Catholic Morality*, 83-97. New York, NY: The Seabury Press, 1978.

_____. "A Theology of Sin." *Chicago Studies* 21 (Aut 1982): 277-92.

O'Keefe, Mark, O.S.B. "An Analysis and Critique of the Social Aspects of Sin and Conversion in the Moral Theology of Bernard Häring." Ph.D. diss., The Catholic University of America, 1987.

_____. "Social Sin and Fundamental Option." In *Christian Freedom: Essays by the Faculty of the Saint Meinrad School of Theology*, ed. Clayton N. Jefford, 131-44. New York, NY: Peter Lang, 1993.

_____. *What Are They Saying About Social Sin?* New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1990.

Oldenquist, Andrew G. *Moral Philosophy: Text and Readings*, Second Edition. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1978.

Palazzini, Pietro and Salvador Canals, ed. *Sin, Its Reality and Nature: A Historical Survey*. Dublin: Scepter Publishers, Ltd, 1964.

Paul VI, Pope. *Angelus Domini* [Sunday Angelus], 22 September 1974. Available from Vatican: the Holy See [Official Web Site of the Holy See], http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/angelus/1974/documents/hf_p-vi_ang_19 740922_it.html.

_____. Available from Vatican: the Holy See [Official Web Site of the Holy See], http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_e xh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi_en.html.

Peters, Ted. *Sin: Radical Evil in Soul and Society*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994.

Pfeil, Margaret R. "Toward an Understanding of the Language of Social Sin in Magisterial Teaching." Ph.D. diss., Notre Dame University, 2000.

Pironio, Eduardo. *La Iglesia que nace entre nosotros*. Bogota: Indo-American Press Service, 1970.

Pixley, George V. and Clodovis Boff. *The Bible, the Church, and the Poor*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989.

Pope, Stephen. "Proper and Improper Partiality and the Preferential Option for the Poor." *Theological Studies* 54:2 (Jun 1993): 242-72.

Power, David Noel. "Editorial Conclusions." Translated by J.G. Cumming in *The Fate of Confession*, ed. Mary Collins and David N. Power, 127-31. *Concilium* 190. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, Ltd, 1987.

_____. *Love Without Calculation: A Reflection on Divine Kenosis* (New York, NY: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2005).

Quigley, Thomas E. "Latin America's Church: No Turning Back." *Cross Currents* 28:1 (Spr 1978): 79-89.

Rahner, Karl. "The Church of Sinners." In *Theological Investigations* VI, 253-69. New York, NY: The Seabury Press, 1974.

_____. *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*. New York, NY: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1998.

_____. "Reflections on the Unity of Love of Neighbour and the Love of God." In *Theological Investigations* VI, 231-49. New York, NY: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1982.

_____. "Theology of Freedom." In *Theological Investigations* VI, 178-96. New York, NY: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1982.

_____. "Two Basic Types of Christology," In *Theological Investigations* XXIII, 213-23. New York, NY: The Seabury Press, 1975.

_____. "The Unreadiness of the Church's Members to Accept Poverty." Translated by David Bourke in *Theological Investigations* XIV, 270-79. New York, NY: The Seabury Press, 1976.

Ratzinger, Joseph Cardinal. "Bishops, Theologians, and Morality." In *Moral Theology Today: Certitudes and Doubts*, ed. Donald G. McCarthy, 3-24. St. Louis, MO: The Pope John Center, 1984.

_____. "Church and Economy: Responsibility for the Future of the World Economy." *Communio* 13:3 (Aut 1986): 199-204.

_____. "Conscience and Truth." *Catholic Conscience: Foundation and Formation: Proceedings of the Tenth Bishops' Workshop, Dallas Texas*, ed. Russell E. Smith, 7-27. Braintree, MA: The Pope John XXIII Medical-Moral Research and Education Center, 1991.

_____. "Conscience in Time." *Communio* 19:4 (Win 1992): 647-57.

_____. "The Ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council." *Communio* 13:3 (Aut 1986): 239-52.

_____. "Eucharist, Communion and Solidarity." *Osservatore Romano* 1768 (Nov 13, 2002): 6-8.

_____. "Freedom and Liberation: The Anthropological Vision of the Instruction *Libertatis Conscientia*." *Communio* 14 (Spr 1987): 55-72.

_____. *On Conscience*. Boston: National Catholic Bioethics Center, 2005.

_____. *Revelation and Tradition.* (Offenbarung und Überlieferung). Translated by W. J. O'Hara. New York, NY: Herder and Herder, 1966.

_____. *Theological Highlights of Vatican II.* New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1966.

Rendtorff, Rolf. *The Covenant Formula: An Exegetical and Theological Investigation*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, Ltd., 1998.

Richard, Pablo. "The Latin American Church 1959-1978." *Cross Currents* 28:1 (Spr 1978): 34-46.

Riga, Peter. *Sin and Penance: Insights Into the Mystery of Salvation*. Milwaukee, WI: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1961.

Rigali, Norbert J. "Human Solidarity and Sin in the Apostolic Exhortation, *Reconciliation and Penance*." *Living Light* 21 (Jun 1985): 337-44.

_____. "The Moral Act." *Horizons* 10:2 (Fall 1983): 252-66.

Ring, Nancy C. "Sin and Transformation from a Systemic Perspective." *Chicago Studies* 23 (Nov 1984): 303-19.

Roche, Garrett J. "The Poor and the *Code of Canon Law*: Some Relevant Issues in Book II." *Studia canonica* 30 (1996): 177-219.

Rodor, Amin. "The Concept of the Poor in the Context of the Ecclesiology of Liberation Theology." Ph.D. diss., Andrews University, 1986.

Rogers, Katherin A. "Augustine's compatibilism." *Religious Studies* 40:4 (Dec 2004): 415-35.

Rondet, Henri. *Original Sin: The Patristic and Theological Background*. New York, NY: Alba House, 1972.

_____. *The Theology of Sin*. Translated by Royce W. Hughes. Notre Dame, IN: Fides, 1960.

Rossa, Alberto, CMF, comp. *The Theology of Liberation: Selected Writings from The Medellín Documents, Gustavo Gutiérrez, Leonardo Boff, OFM, Jon Sobrino, SJ, Segundo Galilea, Clodovis Boff, OSM, J. B. Lbanio, SJ*. Manila: Historical Conservation Society, 1986.

Ruether, Rosemary Radford. "Feminist Theology and Spirituality." In *Christian Feminism: Visions of a New Humanity*, ed. Judith L. Weidman, 9-32. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1984.

Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Instruction on Certain Aspects of the "Theology of Liberation."* Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Boston: St. Paul Books & Media, 1984.

_____. *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation.* Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Washington, DC: National Catholic Reporter, 1986.

Schillebeeckx, Edward, ed. *Sacramental Reconciliation*. *Concilium* 61, 1971.

Schindler, Thomas. *Ethics: The Social Dimension*, Theology and Life Series, Vol. 27. Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1989.

Schoonenberg, Piet. *Man and Sin: A Theological View*. Translated by Joseph Donceel. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1965.

Schubeck, Thomas L. "Ethics and Liberation Theology." *Theological Studies* 56/1 (March 1995): 107-122.

_____. *Liberation Ethics: Sources, Models, and Norms.* Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg/Fortress Press, 1993.

Searle, Mark. "The Journey of Conversion." *Worship* 54 (1980): 35-55.

Segundo, Juan Luis. *Evolution and Guilt*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1974.

_____. *Theology and the Church: A Response to Cardinal Ratzinger and a Warning to the Whole Church*, rev. ed. Translated by John W. Diercksmeier. San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1987.

Selling, Joseph A. and Jan Jans, ed. *The Splendor of Accuracy: An Examination of the Assertions Made by Veritatis Splendor*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995.

Sievernich, Michael. "'Social Sin' and its Acknowledgment." Translated by J.G. Cumming in *The Fate of Confession*, ed. Mary Collins and David N. Power, 52-63. *Concilium* 190. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, Ltd, 1987.

Slote, Michael. "Agent-Based Virtue Ethics." In *Midwest Studies in Philosophy, Volume XX: Moral Concepts*, ed. Peter A. French, et al., 83-101. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996.

Sloyan, Gerard S. *Is Christ the End of the Law?* Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978.

Sobrino, Jon. *The True Church and the Poor*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1984.

Spilly, Alphonse. "Sin and Alienation in the Old Testament: The Personalist Approach." *Chicago Studies* 21 (Aut 1982): 211-25.

Stegemann, Wolfgang. *The Gospel and the Poor*. Translated by Dietlinde Elliott. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984.

Stenger, Barry J. "The Option for the Poor in Latin American Liberation Theology." Ph.D. diss., The University of Chicago, 1987.

Stowe, Connie Rae. "The Meaning and Justification of the Term, 'Option for the Poor.'" Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 1999.

Sullivan, Francis A., S.J. *Creative Fidelity: Weighing and Interpreting Documents of the Magisterium*. New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1996.

Synodus Episcoporum (1971) [Synod of Bishops (1971)]. *Justice in the World.* In *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage,* ed. David J. O'Brien and Thomas A. Shannon, 287-300. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992.

Synod of Bishops. *Reconciliation and Penance in the Mission of the Church. Unofficial Translation of the Working Document* [*Instrumentum laboris*] *for the Sixth General*

Assembly Synod of Bishops 1983. Ottawa: Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1983.

_____. Synodus Episcoporum (Rome, 1983). *Penance and Reconciliation in the Mission of the Church.* Washington, DC: National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1984.

Synod Secretariat. "Reconciliation and Penance in the Mission of the Church: *Lineamenta*." *Origins* 11:36 (18 February 1982): 565, 567-80.

Thomas Aquinas, St. *Summa Theologiæ*. Translated by the Fathers of the English Domincan Province. New York, NY: Christian Classics, 1981.

_____. *The Summa Theologica*. Literally translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province. Second and Revised Edition, 1920. Online Edition Copyright © 2008 by Kevin Knight. Available from New Advent, http://www.newadvent.org/summa/3020.htm.

Twomey, Gerald S. *The "Preferential Option for the Poor" in Catholic Social Thought from John XXIII to John Paul II*. Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2005.

Vance-Trembath, Sally M. "John Paul II's *Ut unum sint* and Conversation with Women." *Theological Studies* 60:1 (Mar 1999): 95-108.

Walker, Margaret. "Geographies of Responsibility." *Hastings Center Report* 27:1 (Jan-Feb 1997): 38-44.

Warren, Virginia L. "A Kierkegaardian Approach to Moral Philosophy: The Process of Moral Decision-Making." *Journal of Religious Ethics* 10:2 (Fall 1982): 221-37.