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FROM THE EDITOR

This issue of *TSF Bulletin* features a theology article by Peter Savage of Cuernavaca, Mexico. Savage was the guest of TSF during the recent Urbana Missions Convention. This paper, which was presented during a TSF seminar on the interface between U.S. mission boards and Latin American churches, provides an excellent guide for seminarians who seek to make their theological pursuits both academically respectable and relevant to the contemporary world. Luis Cortes, who also presented a paper for us, has become our newest "Perspectives Editor," helping us better serve Hispanic seminarians.

Because we have been able to draw on the Perkins conference on Evangelism and Social Ethics, Inter-Varsity's Urbana '81, and Associate Editor David Watson's excellent review essay, *TSF Bulletin* has seen a somewhat unusual emphasis on missions and evangelism this year. The timing seems appropriate. Several mainline seminaries have become increasingly conscious once again of their responsibility in evangelism and missions. Evangelical schools are benefiting from the often lively debates concerning diverse agendas and emphases in missions. The economic climate is forcing Christian communities to face biblical concerns for compassion and justice. We hope these reviews and articles serve to encourage and inform you in the midst of your study, doing, and proclamation of the Good News.

As we work to prepare each issue of *TSF Bulletin*, we would like to hear from you. More thorough and more frequent feedback from our readers will help us select articles and reviews. The editorials can provide opportunities for you as readers to interact with current concerns. Letters to the Editor would also be welcome. News from TSF chapters encourages other seminarians who are contemplating forming a group or who are seeking more effective agendas.

Effective this spring there will be rate changes and separate subscription lists for our periodicals. *Themelios*, which is the theological student journal of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students, will be serviced by InterVarsity Press. We have been providing a very large subsidy for readers of this journal but are unable to continue that arrangement. The choice of subject matter relevant to students, the excellence of the articles, and the consistent, solidly evangelical perspective continue to make *Themelios* a valuable tool for seminarians. A one-year subscription (\$6.00) includes three issues. *TSF Bulletin*, with over 1,600 subscribers, continues to focus on the theological, personal and socio-ethical issues faced by students in Canadian and U.S. seminaries. The annual rate of \$9 (\$7 for students) includes five issues.

Through these new arrangements, we will enable actual costs to decrease for those readers who choose one or the other of the journals. If you decide to continue receiving both, the price will still be low considering the valuable resources available in eight issues each year. By splitting the subscription lists, we will avoid the necessity of an across-the-board rate increase — and you can choose what materials help you the most. The change will go into effect as current subscriptions expire.

Finally, a note to introduce Associate Editor Tom McAlpine. Tom graduated from Fuller Theological Seminary in 1976 and is currently a Ph.D. candidate in Old Testament at Yale University. After being associated with TWENTYONEHUNDRED Productions (Inter-Varsity's multi-media ministries) since 1972, Tom has now joined TSF to serve in several editorial and field ministry capacities. We gratefully welcome Tom to the team.

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FOUNDATIONS

(Doing theology on the basics of classical faith)

THE "DOING OF THEOLOGY" IN A LATIN AMERICAN CONTEXT

By Peter F. Savage, Coordinator of the Latin American Theological Fraternity

I. The Doing of Theology as a True Christian Vocation

It is critical for this presentation that we be sure we are clear about what we mean by the "doing of theology." For some it has become a mere sociological study, with some biblical concepts thrown into the pot to give it a religious authentication. For others, it is confused with the more popular expression of religious sentiments or testimonies about their faith.

First and foremost, the "doing of theology" is a vocation, a calling given by God to certain persons who have been gifted by him for the task. They have been given to the church to serve as teachers. While everybody must have their understanding renewed (Rom. 12:2), which makes it possible for them to apprehend spiritual and theological truth, this does not give them the authority to feel that at any given time they can give a theological discourse. There is a real place for the "teaching function" in the "perfecting of the saints," which stimulates the church to growth.

Second, these persons have been called to "search the mind of the Lord," to study and reflect under the illumination of the Spirit, so that they can, in due season, speak with God's authority on an issue. They have to listen to what God would want to say. This *active listening* may require months or even years before a final discourse on the subject is made.

Third, the very personalities of these theologians are involved in this process of listening, discerning and reflecting. God may well put these men and women through experiences, trials and sufferings so that through these concrete situations they will become sensitive to what God is saying. More important still, theology is born in worship — a worship that is born from seeing him through the Word and the Spirit, and that bears upon one's own soul. There is a true biblical mysticism that demands from the theologian a close walk with God, so that one might hear what may seem insignificant to others, but which is actually a message for that generation. It is as these two elements are combined, obedience in life to his demands and experiences and an enjoyment of him by the theologian, that this earthen vessel becomes a potential channel.

Fourth, the theologian concentrates on developing a biblical and theological mind or perspective on all issues, values and concepts. There is a struggle to place all thoughts and ideas under the judgment of the Word. This involves an honest struggle to face all issues and questions that face him/her as an individual—married person, parent, teacher, citizen—from a coherent, ordered theological framework. This coherence not only works itself out at a conceptual level but also in the person's daily life, as the theologian works theology out into living reality. His/her life breathes theological convictions.

Fifth, the theologian must live in the twentieth century and face twentieth-century issues, without losing sight of the historical roots of each issue, its sociological structure and its philosophical framework. The theologian does not work as a sociologist, anthropologist, or psychologist, that is, empirically. He/she tries hard to understand the issue, the concept, the value, the problem, but does not readily accept the framework in which

they have been presented. The presuppositions and the framework are examined and attempts are made to give an answer that reflects God's perspective and judgment on the matter. He/she resists the temptation to put sociological, anthropological, psychological and even philosophical keys on the plane of a theological hermeneutical key for the interpretation of the Word of God.

Sixth, theology is essentially missiology. The task of theology is to so undergird the deep concerns in mission that the church moves forward in her task in the twentieth century. It is the theologian's task to help the church to break out of her enslavement to the context in which she lives, so that she can be obedient to her Lord. The theologian must resist enslavement to sociological data and presuppositions, just as earlier theologians needed to resist philosophical frameworks. One must reflect on the whole counsel of God as one faces the challenges of the culture, the historical moment in which one lives. The theologian's pedagogical role helps the church grow in mission; the theologian's prophetic role helps the church move into the world; the theologian's missiological role helps the church proclaim the gospel meaningfully in that historical context.

Seventh, the theologian is not a desk and arm chair theologian. He/she is a committed Christian who is immersed in the "realities" of the "local" church. One reflects and listens from the dust of the battle in which the church is involved, in the smog of the issues that confuse her, the hurts that surround her. It is from this truly pastoral encounter that the theologian can speak.

The theologian reflects and listens from the dust of the battle in which the church is involved, in the smog of the issues that confuse her and the hurts that surround her.

One lives with the community as a community where continuous, on-going repentance is taking place. The theologian helps the community to live as a kingdom community.

Eighth, the theologian is aware that one's task requires sensitivity to the Holy Spirit. The task is not merely conceptual and cognitive, not merely mystical and experiential. In and through it all, there must be a deep awareness of the illumination and guidance of the Spirit. It will be the Spirit, as the author of the Word, who through the Word will illuminate, "whisper" and give one those unusual insights and intuitions that will force one outwards in the missiological task.

II. The Doing of Theology in "Context"

The second clarification that needs to be made concerning the "doing of theology" is that theology is done in context.

The theologian brings to this task a deep sense of humility. He/she is aware that one is living in a historical moment, which has its roots in the past. Any person has been "fashioned" by history and therefore is a member of a given cultural group. Consciously or unconsciously, one shares part or all of the world view of the group — its values, its customs, its social institutions, etc. At the same time one is also aware that the culture to which one belongs is constantly in a state of change. In fact, the theologian may play a very important part in the "doing of history" by contributing to that process. The theologian, even though he/she is not a historian, becomes aware of the many threads that come

together to form that "*present moment*." One must discern the pattern that those threads form. At the same time, one is aware that many facets in that "present moment" are cyclical and are a repetition of elements found in the past.

The theologian brings to the task an awareness of both psychological and social *structures*, even though he/she is not a psychologist or a sociologist. There is an interrelatedness within the various structures that weave together to make one's "context." While not falling into a historical, sociological and psychological determinism, one attempts to understand the factors, the dynamics and the relationships both within and between the structures, so that the Word received from God is meaningful in that given interweaving of realities. In one's analysis of sin, the theologian is careful to identify both the personal and social expressions of sin, its roots in the demonic forces at work within the persons in those structures as well as in the structures themselves.

The structures of society by their very nature have built into them forces or "*powers*." The Western emphasis on industrialization and the goals of "modernity" have produced in many parts of the world structures that respond to a conceptual framework called "an ideology." Each of these ideologies has basic presuppositions, goals and myths that help to promote that structure. By contrast, in many indigenous tribal contexts, the structures respond to other "powers." No longer is it the executive officer or the technologist, but the witchdoctor or medicine man who handles the keys to these "powers."

These structures and "powers" have a way of "fashioning" the psychological structure of the person living in that culture. A "modern" person in a "developed" industrialized society has an attitude to life, a life style, needs, and an inner psychological self worth which is different from the person who is still in the process of moving from a feudal background into an industrialized society. Furthermore, the cultural conditioning on a person in a tribal situation will be different, producing a completely different psychological structure. The hopes, fears, inner security, self worth, and sexual mores will combine to produce a person who belongs to that context.

The theological task demands that the theologian hear, perceive, discern, reflect and speak from within that context. One is aware, on the one hand, that the theological discourse or statement to be given will have its historical framework (this will demand that each successive generation of theologians review, revise and question). Yet, one is also aware, as a member of the whole Body of Christ historically, that the discourse or statement will have its universal framework. This requires humility on the one hand, awesome responsibility on the other!

At the same time, as the theologian speaks within the context in which he/she has been born and lives, one will have an eschatological perspective that will help one transcend the historical moment. If one has an adequate understanding of the biblical perspective of God's intervention in history, one will be able to teach, guide and stimulate one's community of believers as they work together in that context in great hope for the consummation of all things in Christ Jesus. It is this perspective that will demand that the church be constantly renewed, revived and radicalized for her mission within that context — in that historical moment — as well as for her mission to Samaria and the uttermost parts of the world.

III. The Doing of Theology in a Latin American Context

It would be difficult for you to understand the list of critical areas that we must work on in our theological task if we do not first give you a very superficial overview of our Latin American Context.

Historically, we must be aware that there are three large groupings of people. First, the ancient Indian communities that are to be found throughout Latin America in many cases can

trace their histories back some thousands of years. They make up 20% of the population; and while in many situations they maintain their world view, values, customs and social institutions, they are constantly facing the wave of oppression, genocide and cultural humiliation. Second, the mestizos are the sons and daughters of the Spaniards born, often, from illegitimate relationships during the colonial period. Many appropriated Spanish names to hide their dishonour and subjection. Speaking in general terms, when we speak of Latins, we are speaking of these groupings of peoples found throughout the Americas. There are common languages, Spanish and Portuguese, and there are common values, customs and social institutions. There is a history of colonialism to which references are constantly being made in parades, festivities, novels and discourses. Naturally there are many variants of mestizo life and culture, but all have a common thread. Thirdly, there are migrant populations, mainly in the southern states of Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina, and sections of Bolivia and Chile. Their basic histories can be traced to Europe and their values, social institutions and in many cases language are from those places they left some 150 to 25 years ago. Often in these contexts the church is merely the instrument to help keep alive those values, hopes and institutions.

Due to a continuous history of colonialism, Central America, the Latin Caribbean and South America have lived a life of dependency. There has been a constant history of stealing by their colonial rulers, who have dragged off primary resources of gold, silver, tin, etc. This produced a syndrome of dependency which was cultivated by the sovereign master states, as the colonies were structured in their very existence to satisfy the insatiable desires of the colonialists.

While more than a century has gone by since these task masters were thrown off, this same syndrome continues as other empires have taken over. Today, mainly through the "power" of multinational corporations, most countries in Latin America continue to live in dependence on the "superpowers."

Added to the above are the rapid, violent and eruptive changes that have occurred in Latin America since the 1940s as she moved from a pre-industrial, mainly rural and often feudal existence to an urban-centered, industrialized life. Cities have spluttered into existence and sprawled to form such grotesque metropolises as Mexico City, with its seventeen million people, where almost 40% live without drinking water, adequate drainage, or adequate housing. Large movements of populations from the country to the cities, from one country to another, and from Latin America to the USA are common and frequent. One startling fact is that one of the newer Latin countries (containing thirty million people) is to be found as a subculture within the USA.

IV. A Tentative Listing of Issues

The following is a tentative listing of key issues which evangelical theologians in Latin America are facing during this decade. It is a personal survey, open to be questioned and even rephrased. Each section is a bare-bones outline of the issue and the critical contextual questions that need to be faced.

1. Developing a Hermeneutical Approach and Posture in the Twentieth Century

It must be understood that the "doing of theology" is a missionary task and vocation that has been given to the church in her call to fulfill God's call to mission. It is a call of obedience both to the church as a whole and to the theologian/teacher in particular. In essence this task is a hermeneutical task, whereby one discerns and seeks to understand "who is God," and "what does he demand of his people in today's world."

This hermeneutical task is crucial for the church, since she must seek to discover where the true front line of the battle is, so she can avoid being involved in yesterday's battles and sideline skirmishes. For effective evangelization, the church must identify

her enemies, their strength, their approaches and past successes. She must go out to battle and not hide in her caves, her buildings, her garrisons, and her trenches! The problem is how effectively to discern the battle line.

What makes this task both exciting, demanding and challenging is the fact that the hermeneutical approach includes two exegetical tasks: one that helps to clarify, identify and trace the main threads of the context in which the church is rooted and one that grasps the historical context of 2,000 years ago in order to understand the essential message of the biblical text. Both are tough assignments. The former demands the ability to handle certain sociological and psychological tools, while the latter requires literary, grammatical, linguistic and historical tools.

The church must seek to discover where the true front line of the battle is, so she can avoid being involved in yesterday's battles and sideline skirmishes.

It should be underlined that both the exegetes and the theologians are guided, as already indicated in the introduction, by the illumination of the Holy Spirit who breathed the biblical text. Having done all this labor, it is finally the Spirit who gives the worker the intuitions to pursue the study in greater depth.

This hermeneutical approach requires not merely taking ideas and principles and applying them, as a Greek approach would demand, but working on the anvil of obedience as the church moves in her mission. The theologian is involved with the church in her mission. On the anvil of insertion in historical reality the theologian struggles constantly to return to the Word for further understanding, clarification and guidance.

In humility, the theologian is aware that all one does must be constantly questioned. One is aware that one is very much conditioned by the culture and its world view and by the ideology of the system in which one lives and works out one's life. The theologian can only break out of this conditioning through the work of the Spirit as one returns time and time again to the Word for enlightenment. This hermeneutical spiral must be a style that each theologian develops in the struggle to be obedient to the Lord.

2. God, His Kingdom, and History

There are two issues we must address in Latin America. First, the evangelical church, in her attempt to grow in the pattern of the "early church," tends to bypass her historical roots. Thus she does not develop a serious awareness of the continuity of the church through history and the rich legacy she has in her "community wisdom" gained through history. Often she becomes almost legalistic in her traditionalism, believing that her forms and customs have a direct biblical grounding.

This in part is caused by the Saxon missionary movement which has not helped the Latin evangelical church rediscover the Spanish and Portuguese reformations, the influence of the Council of Trent on the Latin culture, and the deep dynamic forces within the existential Latin cultures. The church has become a pseudo-Saxon progeny in her liturgy, her Christian and theological education, her structures, her leadership, etc.

This problem has become more acute because the Saxon missionary movement has not had an adequate view of creation as it relates to redemption. As a result, there is both a division

between the saving work of Jesus Christ and his lordship as Sovereign over all things, and a division between the private life of the individual and one's social involvement in society. Thus the evangelical wants to be ahistorical as well as apolitical.

Second, while theologically we state that God is active, there is a naive tendency to believe that we have him cornered in our particular structure, denomination or even the church! The pertinent question that has to be asked in mission today is "Where is God at work?" How can we recognize where he is at work? Can we limit God to the "fattening of churches and their buildings" or is he at work in the liberation movements, leading oppressed people in their exodus?

To put this in the language of the kingdom, where can we see the Lord reigning today? What are the marks of the kingdom; beyond and outside the sphere of the formal ecclesiastical church? Does God move through the very fibers of history, or is he a mere spectator sitting on the sidelines laughing at the foolish games that humankind plays? In what ways is Satan and his demonic kingdom and influence at work in building the anti-kingdom? What are marks and evidences of this anti-kingdom?

3. The Poor: A Sociological Fact or a Hermeneutical Key?

One of the inescapable facts that we face in this decade is the existence of the poor. People — men, women and children — are oppressed through the process of industrialization, rapid urban growth, corruption in both the government and bureaucracy, corruption in the judicial system, corruption in the land tenure, and a free market only for the rich and powerful. They are without many options in life, lacking health, education, housing, water, adequate diet, etc.

Evangelicalism has tended to flounder between conscience-killing gestures of charity and rational justifications for not being involved.

The theologies of liberation have tended to use this sociological fact as a hermeneutical key to understanding the Bible. God has opted for the poor. Salvation has become liberation — a liberation that allows one to enjoy the full options of life. This freedom is truly a sign of the kingdom, as it expresses God's solidarity with the oppressed. True freedom means true poverty. It becomes the normative lifestyle of the church, which is the church of the poor for the poor. These poor as members of the kingdom will, in love, liberate themselves and liberate the oppressors. Exodus is a vital experience that will come to every people in their moment of history, as God acts with them in their liberation. True spirituality is becoming poor with the poor, in solidarity with their realities of oppression, working together for their full liberation in daily life.

Evangelicalism has tended to flounder between conscience-killing gestures of charity and a rational justification for not being involved in the issue, claiming that priority must be given to individualized salvation. There has been only limited struggle to understand God's sovereignty over his creation and the Lordship of Jesus Christ over his kingdom in today's historical realities. Rather there has been "escapism" which rationalizes that the world is the territory of Satan and the church is the territory of God.

We are left, however, with a theological question that will not go away: What is the church's mission call to the oppressed, the widow, the orphan and the poor? Does God's providence and justice extend beyond the church to the world, demanding that the church be *prophetic* in her role within society, even as Knox was in Scotland in his time? How does the church handle all the violence, both legal and illegal, that surrounds her in every day life? Can she, must she, be involved in revolutionary movements, such as the recent involvement by some Christians in the Sandinista movement? Is the church willing to suffer for more than the cause of religious liberty, to suffer for the poor and the oppressed, as a true expression of God's mercy and justice?

4. Sin: An outdated concept? Personal as well as Structural?

One of the major theological categories, one that is increasingly falling into disuse, is sin! Increasingly in Latin America there is an acceptance of determinism — in the market place, in the psychological structure, in the culture, etc. Very critical personal concepts, such as responsibility, accountability, freedom and the full response of men and women to God in all spheres of life, are being eroded.

Added to this is the fact that, within a certain ideological framework, the concept of sin as personal has been almost replaced by social and structural sin. Humankind is caught in a class struggle. Everyone is either one of the oppressed or one of the oppressors. In one class one is being sinned against; in the other, as a member of that social class, one is sinning against others. When sin is restricted to structural categories, personal sins such as avarice, covetousness, jealousy, etc., are expected to disappear of their own accord once the real social struggle is resolved.

At the very heart of this debate is the replacement of one analysis of human problems by another. The Bible sees the essence of the human problem as being that of rebellion against God: idolatry! The other sees the problem in human terms, the confrontation of one social group in society against another.

This problem is further compounded among evangelicals in Latin America, among whom sin is placed within a narrow range of legalistic demands. The evangelical is a Christian because he/she does not smoke, does not drink, does not go to certain places, etc. Emphasis on holiness of life is reduced to physical separation from certain types of people, places and habits. There is very little understanding of the place of the law, of personal wholistic holiness and the full work of the Holy Spirit as he works out the fruit in the believer's life. In fact, often in the pastoral ministry one discovers, to one's horror, that sin is only sin when the sinner has been discovered in the act.

This is further compounded in evangelical circles where emphasis has been placed on the privatized gospel, with little or no teaching on the Christian's walk in society. This has meant that the evangelical movement has not been prepared to face the complex and serious social issues that our present historical context has brought upon us.

5. Liberation: Salvation from What, and to What?

While redemption and reconciliation have been the two key soteriological concepts that have flourished in the proclamation of the Gospel in Latin America, increasingly the concept of "liberation" has come to the fore. Often, emphasis is placed on the liberation *from*, rather than liberation *to*. The Exodus, in contrast to the entrance into the promised land, is used as the basic working biblical analogy.

This salvation is articulated within the framework of a catholic pelagian view of sin and ability, so that in certain circles it is the oppressed people who through their own initiative "liberate" themselves. It becomes a purely political act to secure a political utopia. It need not be underscored that oppressed people live on hopes, dreams and aspirations of a better life — freedom to en-

joy what the "free have." All this, naturally, can be built on not only by the "liberation movements" but also by the pseudo-catholic popular religious cults.

A more secular version of "liberation" is the gospel of "progress," "modernity" and "development." This secular gospel envisions that people everywhere will reach a "higher standard of living" and that their "purchasing power" will increase. This gospel, interwoven with the myths of consumerism, has produced a powerful force in Latin America — away from the land and into the cities, into industry, and hopefully into the higher rungs of society.

It is this secular gospel of "development" that has attracted many evangelicals in Latin America into projects that do not reflect basic theological frameworks or serious biblical questioning. It is rooted in deep compassion combined with a pragmatism of success. It is believed that if there is a felt and real need, the Christian must meet it with the resources that are readily available to resolve that need. The solution must be effective and, if possible, efficient. In some cases there is a deep desire to present the saving work of the Lord as an appendix to the whole ministry.

Both the theologies of liberation and the theology of development raise some serious and basic questions. Can we respond to the cultural mandate outside of the demands and sphere of the kingdom of God? What is their relationship? Can we begin to deal with people's need before we have called them to repentance and a turning to God? Can there be any true liberation outside the sphere of the kingdom?

This secular gospel of "development" has attracted many evangelicals into projects that do not reflect serious biblical questioning.

6. The New Humanity in Christ Jesus

Evangelicalism has tended in these last generations to emphasize the work of conversion, regeneration and sanctification as producing a privatized change, called the "Born-again Christian," who through disciplining develops a number of personal and private religious characteristics (such as no smoking, no drinking, no beer parlours, etc.), and reads his or her Bible daily (or claims to), goes to church three times a week, says prayers, etc. In some cases there is an emphasis on the fruit of the Holy Spirit as the main goal in the Christian's life, which must be reached over a long period of time. Meanwhile, one must fulfill a certain quota of activities in one's local church, such as evangelism, choir, teaching in the Sunday school, or even serving on some board.

In Latin America, while the same negative traits are emphasized, it is becoming increasingly clear that the vision of the "New Man in Christ" is merely an ecclesiastical projection: attendance at a church, certain activities in the formal church organization, and in some cases responsibilities in organizational leadership. When we speak of pentecostals, who are the majority of evangelicals, we have to add to the above certain supernatural expressions of healing, tongue speaking, etc. However, the concept of the new man/woman in Christ does not become a

holistic model whereby change is expected in sexual mores, work styles, family structures, use of leisure, and involvement in the society.

As we struggle to understand the New Humanity in Christ Jesus, we have to recognize that three very strong currents in Latin America have produced secular versions of the "New Man." The *oldest*, and the one that is slowly dying out, is the rural and indigenous vision: The man or woman with a large family, with many children and grandchildren living together on the land, surrounded by many animals, food and water. They are a close knit, hardworking group, who enjoy above all else getting together for a good number of days to enjoy a fiesta with plenty of food, music, talk and jokes. To be together and to eat well comprise the vision of the "total man" (e.g. Toba in the Northern Argentine).

The *second* is that of "modernity" and "humanism." It is the view of the self-sufficient person who through a process of "education" (schooling) reaches a higher plane of autonomy, security, wealth, power, and status in the social circle. One does not break with one's family. In fact, together with one's family, one succeeds and helps one's brothers and sisters to succeed. One pays a high price to become this new man/woman, in that two or more jobs must be secured. A web of relationships, of "influence," must be established. A continuous "indebtedness" is maintained so as to ensure that when it becomes necessary to climb the next rung of society, there are enough persons of influence in one's debt to make it possible. Throughout this process there is a continuous educational betterment in which the person turns to the enjoyment of the classics, both in literature and music, as well as seeking further education in Europe and the USA.

The *third* vision of the "New Man" is that of the Marxist. While much has been written about it, we only have Cuba as a definite approximation to that model. It is described as a man/woman where equality of opportunity, growth, education, work and health exists. The vision is one in which the class struggle has disappeared and the government of the people, through the party, has been achieved. Success is not emphasized, rather solidarity with the needs of the working man/woman.

7. Jesus Christ: Who Do They Say that I Am?

There are many mental images of who Jesus Christ is. The oldest two are the baby child, impotent in the strong and virile hands of Mary, the virgin and pure; and the suffering Jesus in agony on the Cross, while blessed Mary stands with love and courage at his feet. In both, Mary, the blessed, the pure, comes through as the most enduring image to the worshipper. In recent years, Jesus has come to adult life as the modern guerrilla who leads and stands with those who are found in the struggle for liberation. In many cases, Che Guevara, Sandino and others are on an equal footing with him.

The former images are built into a magical and sacramental view of Christ. He becomes the final being who, through Mary's intercession, is able to resolve problems, provide work, heal the sick, deal with an angry neighbour, resolve a fight or succeed in exams. He demands in return some monetary payment, some costly silver or gold gift, some liturgical response or some pilgrimage.

The latter image is built into a revolutionary context, where physical violence is accepted as an instrument for liberation, where personal ethics becomes secondary to social, and where the party leadership becomes the controlling force in daily life. The image of Jesus Christ as the guerrilla is essentially inspirational and motivational in a highly religious context where the sacramental Jesus Christ was one of fatalism, inactivity, passivism. The guerrilla Jesus might be found in the front line, but no evidence is found of Jesus actually killing people; he is only dressed as the guerrilla.

In evangelical circles, one strong image among others is that

of Jesus, the friend. In the increasing loneliness, frightening insecurity and disorientation in the cities, Jesus as the one who walks, talks and shares those experiences is often the one quoted in testimonies. A healing and miracle-working Christ becomes, among pentecostal circles, the second evangelical image. Both combined present the image of Jesus who forgives and gives personal security for the future in the uncertainty of today. Heaven is a distant reality and often the gospel becomes confused with the gospel of modernity and its promise of "heaven here and now."

All Latin Americans believe in Jesus Christ! The question that needs to be faced is *which Jesus Christ?* Most will emphasize his deity, his otherness; many will emphasize his humanity as babe, and even as a teacher; but few fully understand what his saving work is all about. There is limited understanding of what he is as sovereign Lord and ruling King over his kingdom.

8. The Nature of the Church

One of the major tasks that face theologians in Latin America is that of attempting to help evangelical churches face their identity within the patchwork quilt of denominations. For example, there are more than 500 pentecostal denominations in Chile alone, and there are more than 300 different baptist denominations in Latin America. Most of these churches are not aware of the historical roots and theological framework which gave birth to their particular ecclesiastical structure. Many are just aware that they carry through a certain type of liturgy, church order, activities, etc. They are what they are because they came to know the Lord in that church, or their parents or grandparents did so.

The vision of the church is essentially institutional, religious (against secular and social), and deals essentially with things of the other world. The influence of the feudal catholic church on the evangelical is profound. This is evident in the view of the holiness of the "building," the liturgy and attendance to it, the sanctity of the leadership and the limited place of the laity. Often the magical and sacramental passes over into the evangelical church without the people even being aware of its influence.

While renewal movements apart from the pentecostal movement have now come into being in Latin America, they are still small and limited in their radius of influence. They have emphasized a change of liturgy, church structure, style of leadership and a greater openness to the work of the Holy Spirit. In some cases there is a real attempt to take renewal, revival and radicalization seriously within the constant challenge of "Semper Reformanda."

In the light of the heavy shadow of the Roman Catholic church and the present models we see in Latin America, we have to return to Scripture and ask, "What is the church?" As we do this, secondary questions immediately begin to pop up: What are the *pre-requisites* for becoming a member of the church? How can we *distinguish* the local community of Christians, the local church, from other social and pseudo-religious groups? Why should the church exist at all? What are the *reasons* for its existence? What objectives should it be reaching?

9. The Church and the State.

One of the social structures that needs to be examined from a theological perspective is the state. What justifies its existence? What are the essential *marks* of state from a biblical and theological perspective? When can we speak of a state ceasing to be what it was created to be? How does power operate in a state? What are its parameters in a "just" state? Is a state subject to God, his sovereign reign over his creation? What role does the kingdom of God have with the state?

If we are to accept the Reformed decrees as a basis for our reflection, what relationship has the state with the other three areas of marriage, family and work? Should the state have such

over-arching powers to legislate every facet of life, or should it be limited to certain social spheres for the good of the society?

What roles does the church have in regard to the state? Both are political institutions as they relate to the society as a whole. Both use power, both have structures, both have wealth, both appeal to the same group of people. What should be the relationship between them?

All of these questions are pertinent for us in Latin America, since the evangelical church is still a babe when it comes to her relationship with the state. Most churches were born in the period of severe persecution and learned that the only role they had was to be pilgrims in a foreign land. From 1961, following the Second Vatican Council, religious liberty was known throughout Latin America in a new way, even though sporadic persecution has continued until this day. The evangelical church in these last ten years has increasingly become aware of her role within and relationship to the state.

The theologian must resist enslavement to sociological data and presuppositions, just as earlier theologians needed to resist philosophical frameworks.

There are two facets of the "Ideology of the State" that must concern us. First, the most powerful group, often the military, is that one group in society that can and will control the state to its own end. When does a *coup d'etat* become a legitimate government? When can the Christian in all good conscience be involved in civil disobedience in the light of the use of such "power"? Second, a state ideology has been developed in several countries, termed "national security," whereby the very reason for the existence of the state is the protection of its boundaries, its possessions, and its international economic ties. It is often expressed in very religious language, couched in capitalist ideology, but under the surface it reflects a deep idolatry of the state as a supreme entity above all other groups in society.

This idolatry of the state by the state has produced a lack of concern by the state for the poor and downtrodden, the single mother and the political migrant. The state becomes the social institution that protects the interest of the wealthy and powerful, discarding the real rights that citizens have over the state. This poses a psychological, sociological and juridical question: what minimum number of "rights" must a person have in a given society in order to become a "full, integrated, educated, mature and healthy person"? How and by whom should these rights be protected?

10. The Global Village: The North-South Conversations and Cancun

It is interesting to note that the recent Cancun meetings between some "industrialized" and "developed" countries and some semi-industrialized and "underdeveloped" countries took place in a recently created town that ten years ago did not exist!

For some time the third world has been trying to convince the first world that their economies, their technological development, their educational development and "progress" is directly dependent on the economies, the life style, the power, technological advance and "development" of the first world. When

Reagan sneezes, we in the third world have pneumonia!

Furthermore, for the last two hundred years, the missionary enterprise has tended to follow the trade routes, the armies, and the centers of power which were established by the Western empires. Often the gospel has been presented in Western clothing, with a built-in dependency, cultural control, and a centralized power structure based in the "sending" country. Many third world churches are cut in the same cloth, with the same measurements, as the mother churches. Their hymn books, their liturgy, their Christian and theological education programs, their church buildings — all have stamped on them "Made in USA."

While the Catholic church was established in Latin America through the power of the sword, the evangelical church has been established by the power of the "dollar." Often the missionary enterprise resembles more a "multinational corporation" than the seventy disciples that the Lord sent out to evangelize.

All of these "realities" pose for us some very serious theological and biblical questions. First, if the Gentile church was free from the cultural control of the Jewish church in Acts 15, so that the Holy Spirit could lead the body of Christ in its world-wide mission, when does the third world church have its own Acts 15? Does not the church in each generation and in each context discover its accountability direct to the Lord for his mission in that context and the world as a whole?

Second, when can there be true mutuality and partnership in the body of Christ world wide, whereby there can be adequate listening to the Holy Spirit through each other? Syncretism only

If the Gentile church was free from the cultural control of the Jewish church in Acts 15, when does the third world church have its own Acts 15?

exists in the third world!? Are the members of the third world countries the only nationals who fight from a nationalistic perspective? When will the church in the first world hear what the third world church is saying?

Third, as there is increased global consciousness, the church also has become more aware of her global existence. The tension between the "local" and often "immediate" and the "global" and a new concept of the "immediate" takes on a new dimension. Can churches break out of their tribal groupings (denominations) to seize the new missionary opportunities? Can the church survive where there is an increase in the ever more powerful "para-ecclesiastical bodies"?

Fourth, the most critical question that needs to be asked is, "What is the church?" Is it an electronic phenomenon? Is it a communication phenomenon? Is it an entertainment phenomenon? Is it a social welfare phenomenon? What is its true identity in the Global Village?

Conclusion

Naturally each of the subjects listed deserves a series of books based on years of research and reflection by a church that is open to listen to what God would say to her in these areas. At times, due to summary form, this discussion may well smack of caricature rather than carefully developed thought containing objectivity and pastoral sensitivity. From the start, I want to express these limitations and my openness to be corrected and enriched through the dialogue which I hope this paper will stimulate.

ACADEME

(Reports from seminary classrooms, special events, and TSF chapters)

EVANGELICAL/LIBERAL THEOLOGY — A FALSE DICHOTOMY? REPORT ON THE HARVARD/GORDON-CONWELL DIALOGUE **By Priscilla Felisky Whitehead (M.Div. student at Harvard Divinity School) and Tom McAlpine (TSF Associate Staff).**

The recent dialogue between Harvard and Gordon-Conwell faculty was a noteworthy example of inter-seminary exchange. This article is a joint effort of a Harvard student who helped organize the discussion and a TSF staff member who was able to attend during his visit to TSF chapters in the Northeast. Priscilla Whitehead contributed the first section, which sets the context. This is followed by Tom McAlpine's edited summary of what the participants actually said, and the article concludes with some of his personal reflections on several of the issues raised in the discussion.

Background

Religious pluralism is a contemporary phenomenon receiving careful attention from many quarters today. It is no longer possible to withdraw from engagement with other major religious traditions. However, what many within those traditions also are discovering, much to their discomfort, is that the pluralism within one particular religion or nation can be as challenging and difficult as that between different traditions. The current media emphasis on the resurgent fundamentalism in American Christianity is a graphic example. How many Christians would be willing to claim some religious identification with their brothers and sisters in the conservative wing of the church? How many evangelicals could find a common ground with the so-called liberal contingent in Christianity? Such questions have not received as much attention in our seminaries and churches as the broader ecumenical ones relating to religious traditions as a whole.

Several Harvard Divinity School faculty, staff and students discovered they shared a mutual interest in exploring the seeming misunderstandings and lack of interaction within the boundaries of the Christian faith itself. Most had experienced personally some degree of pain or frustration at being labeled — or mislabeled — according to someone else's preconceptions or assumptions about their theological positions. Not only did they find that this inhibited genuine dialogue about Christian theology in a pluralistic world, but it also complicated any potential cooperation regarding common concerns. A way was sought to bring together various theological perspectives for the purpose of informing and raising consciousness about labels which may be too hastily and incorrectly assigned.

What emerged as a first step was a two-hour dialogue between professors from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, an admittedly "evangelical institution," and Harvard Divinity School, a most diverse community perceived by some as a bastion of theological liberalism. After some discussion during the planning stages about the value of addressing specific theological topics, it was decided rather to confront two of the common labels themselves and how they are perceived by those within and without their supposed confines. Thus, on 23 November 1981, Professors Richard Lovelace and David Wells from Gordon-Conwell and Professors Gordon Kaufman and Richard Nie-