

A New Leadership: From Inertia to Momentum

No one could have predicted the changes that were to take place in the Roman Catholic Church in the 1960s. They were extensive and dramatic. But they did not come into being without preparatory steps.(1) The inevitability of change and the outline of the overall picture could be perceived only after all the parts had come together.

There are no leaps in history without something to leap from. This chapter and the book that follows trace an unusual course of social evolution, in that few saw the changes coming. I want to begin by looking at the more important precedents of change in the Latin American church.

Even longtime observers of the Latin American scene did not realize that apparently unrelated events or movements in the 1950s and early 1960s would converge and bring about immense consequences. How did outsiders and insiders alike miss the large-scale changes that were about to take place? How could academics and ambassadors take for granted that the Latin American church would remain an unchanging, fiesta-bound, otherworldly monolith? Neither theologians nor church leaders expected profound and comprehensive changes in Latin American Catholicism.

The Roman Catholic Church was part of the status quo in Latin America. Observers formed stereotypical images of the church in Latin America. To begin to comprehend what has taken place in that institution one first has to realize that the church in Latin America is in crisis. Many Protestants, however, think that Roman Catholicism and Latin America, from 1900 to 1965, remained unchanged:

To most Protestants these [changes] were strange and uncomfortable phenomena. Anti-Catholic polemic had been a familiar stance. We had become accustomed to applying the analytical scalpel and baring the error, corruption, and heresy of the Roman Church. We were skilled at attributing to Roman Catholic dogma all the ills of Latin American culture and society. Even our own doctrine tended to be defined in antithesis. Conversion was often conceived of in terms of leaving the superstition of Rome for the enlightenment of the evangelical church.(2)

Protestant theologian José Miguez Bonino spoke of "tensions of a Catholicism pulled in one direction by its ancient alliances with centers of power, in another by its concern to be in touch with people."(3) W. Dayton Roberts, an Evangelical missionary in Latin America, added: "The current effort of Romanism to identify with the poor and underprivileged, after centuries of being part and parcel of the ruling hegemony, is consequently a tearing, painful process."(4)

The rates of change within the church varied widely from country to country. The progressive leadership of the Brazilian and Chilean churches advanced these churches through changes in the 1950s and early 1960s, while portions of the Mexican and Central American churches adopted

new approaches in the 1970s. The majority of Latin American Catholics remained unchanged in the first two-thirds of this century, bound by inertia. Moreover, a minority of traditional Catholics in Latin America and in the Vatican opposed proposals for changes in ideology or practices that appeared in Latin America. Against that background significant persons or groups described below played active leadership roles in changing the ideology and practices of Latin American church.

I turn now to six factors or movements that led to gradual modernization of the Latin American church between 1900 and 1965: lay movements, influx of foreign religious personnel, formation of transnational and national structures, papal nuncios, new ecclesial leadership groups, and John XXIII and Vatican II.

Signs of Life: Lay Movements

A major sign of new life in the Latin American church was the formation and growth of a number of lay movements. They began appearing in the first two decades of this century as organizations of militant lay persons with close ties to their local priests and bishops. They derived their inspiration from Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* (1891). The movements served several purposes: defense of Catholic interests against secularistic or anti-Catholic governments, promotion of social justice (better working conditions, just wages), and promotion of "Catholic culture" (public expression of faith through outdoor ceremonies and pilgrimages, dedication of the nation to God, instruction in Catholic teaching in public schools). Some movements of this era focused on workers or farmers but the most notable utilized well-educated or well-placed lay persons in attempts to influence national policy or to defend the place of the church in society. Typically the movements had no ties with other Latin American groups or with lay movements in Europe.

These early movements seldom remained effective for more than a few years of often intense activity. For the most part, they lacked bureaucratic structures for recruitment, selection, and training that would have aided survival and growth. Instead the movements depended almost wholly upon the charisms of a single individual, usually a priest or bishop, and resulted in a personalistic following that continued for the relatively short life of an ad hoc cause.

Catholic Action

The most important lay movements began after 1930. Chief among them was *Acción Católica*, Catholic Action.⁽⁵⁾ It was to become a major factor in the life of the Latin American church, though it is seldom mentioned in general Latin American histories. Catholic Action emphasized a distinct and active role for lay persons, an innovation of some consequence in a culture where lay persons were expected to be faithful, passive members of the church. Catholic Action was this-worldly. It demanded activity, not *discusiones a café*. It had international ties, especially to Europe. It nurtured a whole generation of leaders, many of whom rose to positions of national political or intellectual leadership.

At first, in the 1930s, Latin American Catholic Action tended to follow the Italian model of Catholic Action, generalized, embracing all social categories of Catholics. Later, especially after 1945, it tended to follow specialized models of French and Belgian derivation, based on the work of Canon (later Cardinal) Joseph Cardijn. This later model developed three largely autonomous branches to recruit young men and women who were farmers, workers, or students. The goal of

Catholic Action was for lay persons to influence the secular milieu in which they worked. In small cells or groups they were to *see* and describe the situation in which they worked or lived, to *judge* the situation in the light of Christian principles (such as justice and charity), and then to *act* realistically to correct or enhance their milieu.

It is worth noting that this model of Catholic Action is sometimes thought to imitate communist organization and tactics. It was no accident that the organizational structure of the French model of Catholic Action resembled the interlocking cells of the Communist Party. But the methodology of see-judge-act (even if it owed something to Marxist praxis) came from Thomas Aquinas's teaching on prudence.

The three Latin American branches of the French model, JAC (Juventud Agrícola Católica), JOC (Juventud Obrera Católica), and JUC (Juventud Universitaria Católica) grew at differing rates. Thousands joined JAC in Argentina, but it was virtually unknown in neighboring Bolivia. Brazilian JOC increased from 15,000 members in 1953 to 120,000 in the mid-1960s. But in other countries Catholics often opted for Catholic Action in the larger sense and created labor leadership schools (as in Bolivia) or Catholic labor unions (such as CLASC, which operated in Venezuela and other countries), instead of joining JOC.(6)

In most Latin American countries where specialized Catholic Action was growing the favored branch was JUC. Its major goal was control of national student movements and of secular universities through student participation in their *co-gobierno* (a privilege won in Córdoba in 1918 and thereafter extended to many other Latin American universities). JUC won many local and national student elections; the cause it opposed in the 1950s and early 1960s was communism.

Catholic Action, appearing as early as 1920 in Cuba, 1930 in Argentina, 1935 in Costa Rica and Peru, and 1938 in Bolivia, gained significant size and influence in the 1950s and '60s. By 1953 the time was ripe for an important climax: the II Interamerican Study Week at Chimbote, Peru.(7)

The meeting foreshadowed decisive changes in the Latin American church. Some observers, such as Helmut Vitalis, have seen the event as the turning point in Latin American Catholicism.(8) Delegates from twenty Latin American countries gathered for the meeting. They began with a lengthy, if somewhat clumsy, description of the Latin American church. They agreed that most Latin American Catholics were only nominally Catholic, with only an appalling minimum of religious instruction. They could be expected to reflect but nominal acceptance of the spirit and dictates of the gospel. Their Catholicism consisted of a traditional set of pious customs, a superficial substitute for those demands of a vital nature that the gospel made upon their lives. Latin American Catholicism needed a profound revitalization.

The Chimbote delegates attempted to describe the socioeconomic, cultural, and political context of Latin American Catholicism. Their description is not so interesting for its content as for its description of social and political realities—a major part of the final document, giving it a this-worldly character that was not typical of Latin American Catholicism. The constructive and objective approach that the Chimbote delegates took continued in their discussion of the Protestant presence in Latin America. They urged civil tolerance and freedom of worship. They urged love, rather than hostility, for Protestants.

The Chimbote report remained a guide for Catholic Actionists for the next few years. The IV Interamerican Catholic Action Week reaffirmed three years later the Chimbote conclusions. Moreover, the report was referred to the first Lay Apostolate Congress in Rome in 1957. Events and consciousness anticipated a new era. A giant was beginning to awake.

Although the social positions of Catholic Action members were open and advanced, their political positions in 1953 were generally conservative. Little by little Catholic Action was entering a crisis, a crisis caused not so much by an opening to Marxism or socialism but by something more fundamental: the rationale behind Catholic Action had to be changed.

Gustavo Gutiérrez describes the dilemma well: he himself suffered through it as national adviser to the Catholic Student Movement in Peru.⁽⁹⁾ Gutiérrez saw a church at the service of the world. Further, there were not two histories, two worlds-religious and secular; there was only history. This represented an enormous shift in thinking. Previously, in the 1950s and early 1960s, Catholic Actionists attempted to set up a "New Christendom" in Latin America. They had promoted political parties, labor unions, student organizations, and newspapers "of Christian inspiration." Throughout Latin America appeared parties such as *Ação Popular* and Christian Democracy, unions such as CLASC, newspapers such as *Presencia* (the largest daily newspaper in Bolivia), and university student parties, to serve as the political arm of Catholic Action.

The Cursillo Movement

In the late 1950s, especially after the massive influx of missionaries from Europe and North America, a number of other major lay movements developed. These included the Christian Life Community (popularly known as the Jesuit Sodality before 1968), the Legion of Mary, the St. Vincent de Paul Society, and the Union of Christian Employers and Managers. Some of these, such as the Christian Family Movement, were to achieve considerable influence in the Andean region and the Caribbean. Particularly important were the *Cursillos de cristiandad* (Short Courses in Christianity) in which millions of Latin Americans participated. In Santo Domingo, capital of the Dominican Republic, some 50,000 persons have made a Cursillo.

One "makes" a Cursillo: they are such intense experiences that they are recalled in terms of creativity. Spanish Bishop Juan Hervás with Eduardo Bonnín and other Spanish laymen introduced in 1949 and refined over a few years the content and techniques of the Cursillo. Exportation from Spain to Latin America began in the late 1950s and the movement spread quickly but unevenly to one then another Latin American country. The movement peaked in the early 1960s and diminished severely after Vatican Council II in the Andean countries. Nonetheless the Cursillos continue strong in some Central American and Caribbean countries.

To counteract the preference of many Latin American men to leave the practice of religion to women, Spanish founders of the Cursillo and Latin American directors limited enrollment to men. Curious and not wishing to be excluded from something that had affected husbands or fiancés, Spanish and Latin American women petitioned for some years to participate in the Cursillos. Their request was granted but the general policy continued that when the Cursillo movement began in a new place only men were invited for the first year or two.

Prospective *cursillistas* often were screened before being invited to participate and the invitation was often considered to be a call to membership in an elite. Certain types were excluded: persons

whose marriage could not be recognized by the church, those described as "loosely packaged," and those thought dominated by their spouse. Preference was given to leadership types, persons known to be able to influence others, and those who held important positions in government or business.

Typically thirty to forty men or women make a Cursillo; thirteen lay persons and a priest direct it. A lay person, called the rector, acts as overall director; the priest acts as spiritual advisor; the other twelve lay persons are called professors (in fact, they act as co-directors and often as spiritual advisors and animators). All are carefully schooled in the Cursillo method.

Although the Cursillo often appears as a spontaneous experience, even the jokes, laughter, and music are scheduled. Hervas and his followers permit little deviation in the structuring of the Cursillo. The three-day experience starts with an overnight retreat, beginning on a Thursday evening and continuing to midday Friday. The *cursillistas* maintain silence and the directors foster an atmosphere of reflection. For many participants the retreat period offers the opportunity to "shift gears" from a hectic life, to perceive that something important is going to take place, and to dwell on obstacles that kept them back from full participation in Christian life.

After noon on Friday the fifteen spiritual talks begin, followed by intense and frank discussion that form the core of the Cursillo experience. Lay professors give ten of the talks and the priest gives the remaining five. The talks sum up the essence of Christianity, following traditional church concepts with some modification for recent theological formulations. The professors speak from personal experience (sometimes to the point of revealing their own dramatic failures) and relate the substance of their talk to the life of the laity-problems that men and women face in the world today. Therein lies much of the impact of the Cursillo: profound and intense presentation, and endorsement by respected community leaders.

The Cursillo has a strong impact on most participants. Sudden and "surprise" conversions of "public sinners" or high officials (sometimes the two are the same) are well known. Many lay men and women participating actively in the church or in the role of the church in society owe their commitment to the Cursillo experience.

Nonetheless criticisms of the movement are numerous. Many *cursillistas* drift off to remain uncommitted. (Cursillo originators attempted to forestall slippage by means of a "Fourth Day," a continuation of the Cursillo experience through weekly or monthly follow-up meetings called *Ultreya* ["beyond"].) Some dismiss the Cursillo as a pre-Vatican II movement that prepares lay persons for duty in a clerical church. Whatever its failings, the Cursillo exposed millions, even if fleetingly, to a vision of the essence of Christianity, something many had not seen before.

In sociological terms, the lay movements represented the church's effort to capture the loyalties of and to mobilize key status groups-farm workers, urban workers, intellectuals, and students. These groups were often the target of Protestant missionaries or of the secular left. The church needed new structures to do this and it created lay movements as part of organizational specialization in local church systems. Changes in the structures of the church and in the work carried on within those structures become more evident in the consideration of two major happenings in the Latin American church prior to the Medellin Conference: the massive influx of religious personnel from North America and Europe, and the formation of the Latin American Episcopal Council (CELAM).

Missionary Influx

A phenomenon that illustrates well the changing nature of the Catholic Church as a transnational agency is the sending and receiving of thousands of clerical and lay missionaries to Latin America in the 1950s and '60s.(10) Missionaries of diverse nationalities have been going to Latin America since colonial times but, after the first wave of Spaniards, missionaries tended to arrive sporadically and in small numbers. The first, large, modern influx began during World War II due to the blocking of mission areas, especially in the Far East. The second modern influx, larger in extent, began in the mid-1950s and reached its climax in the mid-1960s.

In large part the missionaries came because of a dearth of native clergy. The expulsion of Spanish priests from most Latin American countries in the nineteenth century and the hardships and limitations imposed on the church by newly formed republican governments caused a precipitous decline in the number of priests and religious brothers, a decline from which the Latin American church has never fully recovered. Before the wars of independence in the 1800s, there was one priest or brother for about every 1,000 persons; by 1890 there was one priest or brother for every 3,000 persons; and by 1930 and thereafter, one for every 5,000 persons. Pastoral care on all but a selective basis becomes virtually impossible under such conditions.

Among the first to call attention in the U.S.A. to the situation were the Maryknoll missionaries, who turned their energies to Peru, Bolivia, and Chile instead of China and Japan during World War II. Foremost among them was John Considine, who argued for a massive sending of religious personnel, clerical and lay, for Latin America.(11) Pope John XXIII (1958-63) exerted special efforts to interest and motivate religious orders and diocesan priests from the United States and Canada to go to Latin America. This was symbolized concretely by a papal request in 1961 that religious orders send 10 percent of their members to Latin America. That voluntary quota was never fully realized, but thousands of priests, brothers, and sisters went from North Atlantic bases to work in Latin America. They were joined by lay men and women who served through PAVLA (Papal Volunteers for Latin America) and similar organizations.

The implications of that influx have not been fully explored (or even alluded to by many leading Latin American historians). It meant the importation of new ideas and lifestyles. It also meant new cultural motivations and expectations. For the receiving church, there was a reverse cultural shock. One has only to imagine what it would mean to a relatively small national church, as in Bolivia, to receive in ten years a 60 percent increase in religious personnel. The Bolivian church received personnel from the U.S.A., Canada, Spain, Italy, Germany, France, Holland, Belgium, and Ireland-to name only the most numerous national groupings. The Latin American church could never be the same again. Moreover, through these foreign personnel, advances of the Latin American church were quickly and often approvingly communicated to churches of the developed world.

The isolation of the churches of the Americas began to disappear. The U.S. and Canadian churches, as young churches, had earlier concentrated their efforts on working with hordes of immigrants. With declining immigration and with large numbers of religious personnel after World War II, the U.S.A. and Canada were in a position for the first time to turn their interests to the church beyond their borders. As Archbishop Joseph Bernardin, former executive secretary of the National Council of Catholic Bishops, remarked: "Before 1960 there were not ten bishops in the United States who knew the names of five bishops in Latin America."(12) Participation in joint

missionary effort was to change that.

Creation of CELAM and National Councils

Another major event in the transnational character of the Latin American church was the formation in 1955 of CELAM, the Latin American Episcopal Council. CELAM holds ordinary conferences every year and extraordinary conferences about every ten years. The first extraordinary conference, at Rio de Janeiro in 1955, is forgettable; the second, at Medellín, Colombia, in 1968, and the third, at Puebla, Mexico, in 1979, are not. The conference in Rio, although having little memorable to say, is recalled for being the first time the church came together in Latin America and for creating CELAM as a permanent transnational entity.

Efforts at establishing a Latin American church council had long been afoot. The first meeting of the Latin American bishops took place at Rome in 1899. It was too early for the formation of a regional body. In a continent where letters took two months to arrive at their destination, if arrive they did, the likelihood of effective communication needed as a basis for international interaction was lacking.

North Americans do not realize how organizationally weak the Latin American church has been. In contrast to the long-standing National Council of Bishops and Canadian Bishops Council, Latin American organizational activity and structuring at national and regional levels are of recent origin. For an institution that is transnational by its very nature, the expansion of international linkages, structures, and activity in the Latin American church are major developments.

The implications for those who cooperate or compete with the Roman Catholic Church are enormous. The consequences for international communism, Protestant church bodies, the U.S. State Department, the Latin American military establishment, and Latin American governments are only partly understood by them. President Carter in 1979 ordered U.S. intelligence to monitor closely the phenomenon of the Latin American church and especially its more active elements.

As the 1950s began, the Latin American church was structurally weak at the national and international levels for two reasons: the basic structural nature of the church and the lack of development of infrastructures throughout much of its territory. From its foundation the Catholic Church has been structured basically into dioceses. These "local churches" are geographical units centered around a bishop. In some mission territories prelatures are governed by administrators given various titles; they too are geographical units-on their way to becoming dioceses. In effect the globe is divided into units administered by a bishop or the equivalent. These administrators relate directly to Rome. There is a sense in which there is no place in primitive Christian theology or practice for national or regional bodies. Nonetheless there are compelling reasons for organizational coordination and activity at those levels.

Secondly, Latin America has been characterized by weakness of infrastructures: highways, airlines, telephone systems, intermediate governing structures, and the like. Thus, it is no surprise at all in a country where there are only two paved highways that one bishop has very little idea of what another bishop is doing or planning.

Only as airline communication reached a more extensive level did the possibilities of national and regional councils open up. (A train ride from La Paz to Buenos Aires [approx. 1,400 miles as the

crow flies] could take five days.) National church councils in general are still organizationally weak in resources. Nevertheless, their creation has meant a qualitative difference in the organizational capacity of the church. Inasmuch as most social or religious issues have a national character, national councils enable the church to address them in a more comprehensive and effective fashion. Then too, the national conferences give the bishops more influence. It is one thing for the president of Bolivia to deny the request of Jorge Manrique, archbishop of La Paz, that a foreign priest not be expelled; it is quite another thing for the president to face the "demand" of the national council of bishops to keep hands off. In addition, the national conferences have been able to identify and disseminate theological or pastoral innovations through national offices of education or pastoral planning. With the formation of national conferences and their specialized departments, the rapid dissemination of new ideas became possible. A relatively remote place such as La Paz learned quickly what was going on at Ivan Illich's Center for Intercultural Formation in Cuernavaca, Mexico, or what further ideas Paulo Freire in Chile (in the early 1970s) had about adult education. The National Office of Catholic Education acted as a listening post for those progressive ideas. From the La Paz office, these ideas spread through newsletters and informal channels to dioceses and parishes.

The same organizational gains have been made at the regional level through CELAM. Talented, well-trained staff members were recruited from many Latin American countries for CELAM departments, such as education, CELAM institutes, such as catechetics at Medellín, and CLAR, the Latin American Conference of Religious (men and women who belong to religious orders or congregations). CELAM publication of documents, studies, and popular treatments of updated theology or worship has been elaborate.

Although CELAM itself is now housed in a large headquarters in Bogotá, the building itself is a symbol of outside dependence by the Latin American Episcopal Council. It took twelve years to be realized: the Latin American church is relatively weak in terms of finances. It depends heavily for support on outside sources, especially West Germany and the United States, a factor that hampers full independence of the Latin American church.

Vatican Envoys: Formal and Informal Roles

Few analyses of the Latin American church take into account the structured transnational character of the Roman Catholic Church, precisely in the person and role of the nuncios in each country. Three sets of formal ties link the Latin American church to the central church organization in Rome. First, individual bishops are interrelated with the pope directly or indirectly through the Roman Curia, the upper level of the Vatican organizational structure. Secondly, CELAM has strong ties with Rome through the Pontifical Commission for Latin America. Thirdly, papal nuncios represent the Vatican in individual countries and in turn are tied to the Vatican through the Secretariate of State. Both CELAM and the nuncios furnish the church with formal organizational linkages across national lines.

Some nuncios have also been important figures in atypical ways. Historians or social scientists mention on occasion Archbishop Cesare Zacchi in Cuba or Archbishop Emmanuele Clarizio in the Dominican Republic. However, from a social science perspective, episodic events are insufficient. One must also uncover and analyze formal and informal structures within organizations, structures that in this case furnish transnational linkages.

The roles nuncios have played in the Latin American church go beyond their official delineation. Vallier defines nuncios in terms of their role specialization: diplomacy. He sees their specialization as built around a relational system. "Within this system nuncios are oriented to officials in sovereign states . . . Relations between the Holy See and sovereign states are critical for regular religious work in the field. Without the proper 'working conditions' at the national level, the church cannot proselytize and cannot make contact with residential bishops, and through them, with the faithful."(13) In Vallier's view the role of the nuncio is the securing of conditions favorable to activity in political systems. The nuncio thus becomes a critical agent in the transnational system of the Latin American church. Further, the role definition of the nuncio is both similar to and fuller than that of an ambassador.

The nuncio performs other formal and informal roles that Vallier and others overlook. A particularly important formal role is their part in the selection of bishops. Nuncios review, characterize, and recommend those who have been postulated as candidates for the episcopacy by the grass roots or by other bishops. Nuncios have also been important informal political figures in national as well as ecclesiastical affairs. From the point of view of bishops, nuncios are not supposed to interfere in the internal affairs of the local church. But nuncios do act in internal affairs.

For their part, nuncios lament that such interventions were or are necessary. "There was no one else," or "The church here was so weak, I had to step in," Nuncio Rómulo Carboni was accustomed to say about his activities in Peru. What he meant was that until recently there was no formal structure of consequence at the national level or that local bishops did not know how to interact nationally for joint political strategy or how to represent their interests in international circles.

Nuncios have attempted to influence repressive governments and motivate them to improve the human rights situation. In such instances nuncios may end up defending the rights of activist priests or lay persons with whose ideology they may disagree. Nuncios have been influential in forging certain political compromises, as in Cuba and the Dominican Republic. Papal representatives have also been very important in Latin America for the obtaining and channeling of resources (money and personnel) from other national churches, especially those of the North Atlantic.

The nuncio as entrepreneur was best illustrated by Archbishop Rómulo Carboni, for ten years papal nuncio in Peru. After he arrived in Peru, in 1959, Carboni traveled tirelessly all over the country. He visited more places than even peripatetic President Fernando Belaunde in his first presidency. Carboni worked up a plan for Peru. He asked all the bishops for essential data about their diocese. A compilation was translated into English, printed, and sent to all the bishops and religious superiors of Canada and the United States. The result was phenomenal. One hundred fifty religious communities from other countries sent personnel to Peru. Of all U.S. diocesan priests who went to Latin America, 68 percent went to Peru. Carboni also acted in the coordination needed between sending and receiving churches.

The informal roles played by nuncios have far exceeded their formal role definition. Their wider activities, even when believed to be necessary, were also annoying in the eyes of local church authorities who resented the intrusion of outsiders in their internal affairs. (Eventually Carboni had to leave Peru because of his repeated interference.) The nuncios' wider role definition had

been a response to a power vacuum; with the creation and strengthening of national church councils, nuncios have tended to retreat to narrower and stricter role definitions. Nonetheless, they are important linkages for the church as a transnational body.

Informal Networks and New Leadership Groups

Surrounding the conferences formed at the national and regional levels are informal networks of intellectuals and activists. Their number is difficult to determine with accuracy but the relative size and shape can be gauged from events such as the Puebla conference (1979) and through formal network analysis done some years earlier.⁽¹⁴⁾ There is more than a single network of religious thinkers; the networks of intellectuals, planners, and activists tend to intersect and overlap. These networks are the driving force of the Latin American church. At the core is a group of intellectuals, most of them active in the elaboration of theology of liberation. This group, at least at the Puebla conference, numbered about thirty persons. This is almost exactly the same group that came together for the major meeting of Latin American theologians in 1975 at Mexico City

Theologians act as the inner force of the Latin American church, and another network functions as the connecting force. This group is worldwide but its tightest connections are between the Latin American countries and the triangle of North America, South America, and Western Europe. These groups came to know one another through CICOP (Catholic Inter-American Cooperation Program) meetings in the U.S.A. (1964-71), Vatican Council II (1962-65), World Council of Churches meetings at various times, and through Third World ecumenical meetings, such as that held in Dar es Salaam (1976).⁽¹⁵⁾ Participants in the core connecting network are international and ecumenical in outlook. They are well educated, well traveled, and urgent about what they are doing.

One should look beyond the networks themselves to focus on individual members, for they represent new churchmen, new religious types. Anthropological and sociological researchers working in largely primitive and peasant cultures identified distinct types of religious leaders: shaman, magician, and priest. Max Weber favored the magician-priest-prophet trinomial. Research in complex cultures has added mystic, founder, reformer, and saint. A more contemporary description will be suggested here.

The new religious figures comprise a group of articulate and active Christian advocates and strategists. This group has emerged globally during the last three decades, and in Latin America during the last two decades. The boundaries of the group are far from distinct. But there is little doubt about the broad criteria defining membership.

To be a member of the new front-line group one must betypically-an ordained priest or minister, or even a bishop, although some of the newer members, such as Enrique Dussel and Rosemary Ruether, are lay persons. The fact of ordination gives a stamp of authenticity to someone's descriptions or evaluations of an inside situation. A new member has also-typically-been associated with some dramatic public event, such as publishing a controversial book, setting forth some sort of program, or being involved in an ecclesiastical crisis or major event such as the Puebla or Medellín conferences. This provides him (typically male) with visibility and a reputation. Observers can take positions for or against him and gain a sense of participation through evaluation of his reputation and activities.

The new ecclesial pathbreakers have little in common with confessionally oriented believers. Their field is the whole Christian enterprise-and beyond that, the universe. They do not attempt to promote Roman Catholicism, Lutheranism, or Methodism. Instead they focus on the universal church and the modern world. In most cases, they are cosmopolitan, deeply involved in the urban world (often in direct contact with the poor) and in international activities. Their common milieu provides them with a basis for international rapport and makes possible the continual exchange of ideas through formal media, if not through interpersonal contact.

As implied, the new leaders are sociologically oriented: they use either sociological concepts and research findings or sociological metaphors in their theological reasoning. Such topics as doctrine, belief, worship, and evangelization are dealt with frequently in relation to sociological principles concerning status, group behavior, institutions, influence, and conflict. Typically, though, they are weak in formal political analysis, and such key concepts as power and policy-making are not well dealt with.

The new leaders tend to be engaged in two or more diverse types of professional activity. They may combine pastoral work with missionary concerns, professional duties in a school of theology or university with secondary pastoral duties, planning and research activities in special areas such as ecumenism with an interest in the training and professional problems of the clergy, or journalistic work with chaplaincy duties. Latin American participants in the new networks are, above all, involved with and driven by concern for the poor and the oppressed.

Many of the new leaders hold memberships on or serve as consultants to high-level church (and sometimes government) committees. They are involved with international agencies of coordination and implementation, such as institutes sponsored by CELAM, most of the important internal groupings in CELAM itself (until recently), commissions carrying on the work of Vatican II, key departments of the World and National Council of Churches (Geneva and New York), and the Confederation of Evangelical Churches in Latin America. However, all their involvement with the ecclesiastical establishment is characterized by the maintenance of the critical, open posture that is a trademark of the new ecclesial leadership.

John XXIII and Vatican II

The sixth factor that changed the Latin American church happened outside Latin America: the election of John XXIII and the call for Vatican Council II. John with his warmth, effusiveness, and openness to religions and cultures outside Europe set in motion the *aggiornamento*, the updating of the Catholic Church, that was soon to touch the Latin American church in a variety of ways. The most significant impulse for change was the four-year experience of Vatican II. But many other initiatives for change in Latin America were taken during the five-year reign of Pope John. One of the most influential of these was the Ten-Year Plan of Aid to Latin America, which included the call for 10 percent of religious personnel to be sent there from Europe, Canada, and the United States. John, by force of his personality and vision, created an atmosphere of hope, creativity, and outreach.

The most important event in the life of the Latin American church in almost five hundred years of existence was the experience of Vatican Council II. The council brought Latin Americans into daily contact with church leaders from all over the world and it forced submerged issues to the surface. Moreover, it set in motion or reinforced a whole series of properly Latin American

initiatives that are the subject of the remainder of this book: Latin American theology, grassroots movements, new authority relationships, and critical stands on social issues.

The announcement of the Second Vatican Council was heard like a cannon shot across most of Latin America. The initiative coming from Rome had been as unexpected as the election of John XXIII. Dutifully but still in mild shock, Latin American bishops and their advisors prepared for the council. It would be the first time in history that Latin American bishops would participate in a church council in numbers proportionate to the Latin American percentage of the world Catholic population.

The very fact of their profusion would make the Latin American church conspicuous: it was the largest in the world. Over 600 bishops and 319 *periti* from Latin America participated in the council. But whether the Latin American church would be up to playing a major role was another story.

Almost a year was spent in preparation for the council. The Latin American church found itself scurrying. Consultations were held with active lay groups, with practically anyone who could be called a theologian, and with *periti* (that loosely defined group of experts who would advise bishops). Many of these advisors accompanied their bishops to Rome and some participated directly in the council. But except for having a part to play in the preparation of one document and the occasional noteworthy interventions of a few Latin American bishops, the Latin American church did not go to the council as a pacesetter. It went rather as a learner.

The council was a vast learning experience for the Latin American church. The learning began with the bishops and their advisors and spread to grassroots levels through the ensuing years, resulting in a whole series of initiatives already alluded to and culminating in the Medellín conference in 1968.

The council convened every fall in Rome and continued for three and a half months. The experience of the council was particularly intense and stimulating for the bishops from Latin America, who had so much catching-up to do. But behind the scenes was a group probably more important in the life of the Latin American church -- the *periti* and advisors. Many of them were young priests who had recently completed their studies, often in Europe. They acted as intellectual bridges for the Latin American church, interpreting what was taking place in council discussions and eventually reinterpreting for Latin America the ideological thrust of the council.

Much of the rest of the time before and after the sessions in Rome was also spent in learning sessions. Throughout Latin America or in Italy, preceding council sessions, groups such as Father Riccardo Lombardi's Better World Movement held numerous seminars or conferences that amounted to briefing sessions for church leadership groups in Latin America.

The council was important, too, for the formation of informal networks of the new ecclesial leadership groups. Ties were made or strengthened across continental lines, to the extent that Father Louis Colonnese from the U.S.A. was invited to the council as a *peritus* for Latin American bishops. Ties were also made across denominational lines, ties that continue twenty years later. (It is no accident that Protestant theologian Robert McAfee Brown has remained closely attuned to what is taking place intellectually south of the Rio Grande following his participation in Vatican II.)

But the ties that proved to be the most telling in the immediate history of the Latin American church were those forged among the Latin American bishops themselves. The four-year experience of the council brought them together in a way that no other experience had. In fact, CELAM was a weak instrument for change until the experience of Vatican II. At the heart of the Latin American groups was Bishop Manuel Larraín of Chile. A consummate integrator, he worked during the council to pull the Latin American church together and to project it into the future, or at least out of the eighteenth century.

CELAM met in Rome each year during the council sessions to hold its ordinary (yearly) conferences. Larraín was elected president in 1963, the second year of the council. He formed the idea of having a Latin American conference apply what was being expressed at Vatican II to the Latin American situation. At the psychologically appropriate moment, Larraín proposed this to other Latin American bishops at the last session of the council (1965). The idea was enthusiastically received by the other bishops and Pope Paul VI.

Vatican Council II was a modern plan for renewal of the universal church to which the Latin American church actively responded. The bishops realized that their next step would be the application of Vatican II to the Latin American situation. Thus the Latin American Episcopal Council convoked the Medellín (1968) and Puebla (1979) conferences. The Latin American church was moving on a sure path toward change.

Notes

1. For detailed efforts to examine the church in specific national contexts see Thomas C. Bruneau, *The Church in Brazil: The Politics of Religion* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982); Daniel H. Levine, *Religion and Politics in Latin America: The Catholic Church in Venezuela and Colombia* (Princeton University Press, 1981); Brian H. Smith, *The Church and Politics in Chile: Challenges to Modern Catholicism* (Princeton University Press, 1982). For recent general treatments of the Catholic Church in Latin America, see Penny Lernoux, *Cry of the People* (New York: Doubleday, 1980); Otto Maduro, *Religion and Social Conflicts* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1982); Daniel H. Levine, ed., *Churches and Politics in Latin America* (Beverly Hills, Cal.: Sage, 1980). For earlier works on religion and society in Latin America, see Ivan Vallier, *Catholicism, Social Control, and Modernization* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1970); Frederick C. Turner, *Catholicism and Political Development in Latin America* (University of North Carolina Press, 1971); Edward L. Cleary, ed., *Shaping a New World: An Orientation to Latin America* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1971); Henry A. Landsberger, ed., *The Church and Social Change in Latin America* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1970); Emmanuel DeKadt, *Catholic Radicals in Brazil* (New York: Oxford, 1970); Thomas C. Bruneau, *The Political Transformation of the Brazilian Catholic Church* (New York: Cambridge, 1974); Thomas Sanders, "The Church in Latin America," *Foreign Affairs*, 48, 2 (1970). Several excellent review essays have appeared in *Latin American Research Review*: Gerhard Drejonka, "Religion and Social Change in Latin America," 6, 1 (1971) 53-72; Thomas C. Bruneau, "Power and Influence: Analyses of the Church in Latin America and the Case of Brazil," 8, 2 (1973) 25-51; Brian Smith, "Religion and Social Change," 10, 2 (1975) 3-34; Ralph della Cava, "Catholicism and Society in Twentieth-Century Brazil," 11, 2 (1976) 7-50; Daniel H. Levine, "Religion, Society, and Politics: The State of the Art," 16, 3 (1981) 185-209. Hans-Jürgen Priën provides an extensive bibliography on the church and Latin America in *Die Geschichte des Christentums in Lateinamerika* (Göttingen:

Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), pp. 1188-1243. Two annotated bibliographies emphasize Protestantism in Latin America and include references to Roman Catholicism and to Latin America: John H. Sinclair, ed., *Protestantism in Latin America: A Bibliographic Guide* (S. Pasadena, Cal.: William Carey Library, 1976); Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Development of Christianity in the Latin Caribbean* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), pp. 125-29). For a review of current sources of information on the church in Latin America, see Penny Lernoux, "The Latin American Church," *Latin American Research Review*, 15, 2 (1980) 201-11.

2. W. Dayton Roberts, *Strachem of Costa Rica* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), p. 129.

3. Quoted in Roberts, *Strachem*, p. 130.

4. Ibid.

5. Enrique Dussel treats Catholic Action in *Hipótesis para una historia de la Iglesia en América Latina* (Barcelona: Estrela-IEPAL, 1967), pp. 144-46. Arthur Alonso has written a general treatment: *Catholic Action and the Laity* (St. Louis: Herder, 1961). Helpful, although dated, coverage is provided by Gordon F. Anderson, "The Development of Catholic Action, with Special Reference to Latin America" (New York: Union Theological Seminary, S.T.M. thesis, 1960). See also Carlos Alberto de Medina, *Participação a Igreja: Estudo dos movimentos e associapões de leigos* (Cuernavaca: Centro Intercultural de Documentación, 1972); Oscar Domínguez Correa, *El campesino chileno y la Acción Católica Rural* (Fribourg: Oficina Internacional de Investigaciones de FERES, 1961); Elwood R. Gotshall, "Catholicism and Catholic Action in Mexico, 1929-1941: A Church's Response to a Revolutionary Society and the Politics of the Modern World" (University of Pittsburgh, Master's thesis, 1970).

6. For a description of the relationship of the church to labor, see Alexis U. Florini and Annette F. Strefbold, *The Uncertain Alliance: The Catholic Church and Labor in Latin America* (Miami: University of Miami Press, 1973).

7. *Tercera Semana Interamericana de Acción Católica* (Lima and Chimbote, 1953). See also William J. Coleman, *Latin American Catholicism: A Self-Evaluation* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Maryknoll Publications, 1958), and Helmut Gnadt Vitalis, *The Significance of Changes in Latin American Catholicism since Chimbote* (Cuernavaca: Centro Intercultural de Documentación, 1969).

8. Vitalis, *Significance of Changes*, no. 2, pp. I-19.

9. *A Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1973), pp. 45-77.

10. A vivid insight into many aspects of this missionary influx is provided by Gerald Costello, *Mission to Latin America: The Successes and Failures of a Twentieth-Century Crusade* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1979).

11. John Considine, *A Call for Forty Thousand* (New York: Longmans Green, 1946).

12. Interview, April 2, 1971.

13. Ivan Vallier, "The Roman Catholic Church: A Transnational Actor," in Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, eds., *Transnational Relations and World Politics* (Harvard University Press, 1972), p. 131.

14. Ivan Vallier and a graduate student assistant conducted a religious leadership network study in Latin America at the end of the 1960s. Both died before his findings and analysis of results could be completed.

15. See Sergio Torres and Virginia Fabella, eds., *The Emergent Gospel: Theology from the Underside of History* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1978); Kofi Appiah-Kubi and Sergio Torres, eds., *African Theology en Route* (Orbis, 1979); Virginia Fabella, ed., *Asia's Struggle for Full Humanity* (Orbis, 1980); Sergio Torres and John Eagleson, eds., *The Challenge of Basic Christian Communities* (Orbis, 1981); Virginia Fabella and Sergio Torres, eds., *Irruption of the Third World* (Orbis, 1983).