

MORAL THEOLOGY IN LATIN AMERICA

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[Over the past several years, Latin American moral theology, in which liberation theology and its ethics play a prominent role, has been creatively developing its method and content in response to social and cultural changes. While many have incorporated the personalist approach of postconciliar moral theology, it is from the perspective of the victims that they have been addressing issues in bioethics, ecology, cultural transformation, feminist ethics, human rights, and especially the economy. Most now locate solidarity at the center of their ethic.]

THREE TENDENCIES have been evident in Latin American theology, especially Catholic theology, since Vatican II: traditionalist theology with persistent appeals to ecclesiastical documents; progressive postconciliar theology; and liberation theology. This pluralism reflects different pastoral projects, ecclesiologies, and social alliances. The three tendencies sometimes overlap, and each includes a corresponding moral theology.¹

In this survey, we will stress where Latin American moral theology differs from moral theology elsewhere and how it has been evolving over the last several years. Concretely, this means attending chiefly to fundamental moral theology and social ethics, especially as liberation theology, broadly understood, has contributed to theological ethics.

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¹ See José Antonio Lobo, "Líneas y tendencias de la teología moral latinoamericana," *Moralia* 17 (1995) 343-60.

MORAL THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION

Although liberation theology is not simply moral theology, it arose out of ethical indignation and inspires a new way of doing moral theology.² Until recently, however, the moral theology that is part of liberation theology, though suggestive and promising, has been fragmentary and unsystematic.³ Texts by coauthors Antonio Moser and Bernardino Leers and by Tony Mifsud marked important advances.⁴

Recent works by two Colombians, Mauricio García Durán and Carlos Novoa, summarize the main lines of this moral theology that developed throughout the 1970s and 1980s. This discourse is still widely accepted, even though few insist on the “liberation theology” label today and many recent developments have taken place.

More important than specific content is the method that “classic” liberation theology employs.⁵ First, moral theology is a “second act” that presupposes practical commitment. “Orthopraxis” feeds moral reflection and vice versa. Second, moral theology assumes the perspective of the poor (as Gustavo Gutiérrez has stressed for theology in general). Third, moral theology makes use of three “mediations” or theoretical instruments to illuminate reality: empirical analysis, especially social science (others would add philosophy and utopian imagination⁶), theological interpretation, and practical orientations.⁷ This corresponds to the method of Catholic Action groups: see, judge, act.

² H. Miguel Yáñez, “Ética de la liberación: Aproximación metodológica, estado de la cuestión y perspectivas del futuro,” *Stromata* 49 (1993) 109–83, at 123. According to Jon Sobrino, liberation theology is *intellectus amoris* (“Teología en un mundo sufriente: La teología de la liberación como ‘intellectus amoris’,” *Revista Latinoamericana de Teología* 5 [1988] 243–66).

³ See Julio Lois and José Luis Barbero, “Ética cristiana de liberación en América Latina,” *Moralia* 10 (1988) 91–118; Marciano Vidal, *Moral de actitudes*, 8th ed., vol. 3 (Madrid: PS, 1995) 186; F. Moreno Rejon, “Moral fundamental en la teología de la liberación,” *Mysterium liberationis: Conceptos fundamentales de la teología de la liberación* (San Salvador: UCA, 1991) 1.274.

⁴ Antonio Moser and Bernardino Leers, *Teología moral: Conflictos y alternativas* (Madrid: Paulinas, 1987); Tony Mifsud, *Moral de discernimiento*, 4 vols. (Santiago: San Pablo, 1984), with revised editions through 1994.

⁵ For what follows see Mauricio García Durán, “Teología moral y opción por los pobres: Anotaciones desde la perspectiva del método,” *Theologica Xaveriana* 47 (1997) 65–84.

⁶ Moreno Rejon, “Moral fundamental” 280, 284–85.

⁷ See Clodovis Boff, “Epistemology and Method of the Theology of Liberation,” in *Mysterium Liberationis: Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology*, ed. Ignacio Ellacuría and Jon Sobrino (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1993) 57–85. Brazilian Márcio Fabri dos Anjos places the hermeneutic moment first to establish criteria and basic references and then, second, to analyze reality in light of these criteria.

Carlos Novoa has recently summarized the general theological content of moral theology from a liberation perspective.⁸ According to him, Latin American moral theology affirms that the moral life is the practice of love; it is discipleship. Following Christ, however, is not simple imitation. Rather, as Jon Sobrino has emphasized, it entails becoming incarnate in our own world and responding to it creatively, as Jesus responded to his.⁹

Christian morality arises from an encounter with God in community and is rooted in a spirituality of childlike faith (see Gutiérrez). It seeks to discern and to do God's will, namely that God's reign be realized among us in the form of an "integral liberation" including new persons, a new society of brother- and sisterhood, a new Church. Responding to God's gracious gift entails a practical option for the poor and a praxis aimed at social transformation.¹⁰

This summarizes fundamental moral theology in a liberation perspective before important social changes that began as early as the 1980s—changes such as the collapse of the Soviet bloc and the failure of Latin American revolutionary movements; the emergence of the "new economy," and the consolidation of neoliberal capitalism with its structural adjustment programs, structural unemployment, and the debt crisis; the legitimation crisis of traditional politics (governments, parties, guerrilla movements); the growth of feminism and indigenous awareness; new ecological sensitivity; conservative restoration within the Catholic Church; the challenge of post-modern thought; and, finally, increasing social disintegration, on the one hand, with the proliferation of non-government groups in civil society, on the other. All of these developments have had an impact on Latin American theology, including moral theology.

Here we will first indicate schematically what we consider the principal recent trends in Latin American moral theology and then treat a number of them to the extent that they appear deserving of attention for their

See his: "Bioética nas desigualdades sociais," in *A bioética no século XXI*, ed. Volnei Garrafa and Sérgio F. Ibiapina Costa (Brasília: UNB, 2000) 49–65.

⁸ Carlos Novoa M., *El seguimiento histórico de Jesús según el Espíritu: Formación de la conciencia moral*, Colección Teología Hoy, no. 22 (Santafé de Bogotá: Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Facultad de Teología y CEJA, 1995). Novoa compares the theology of conscience developed by Europeans Josef Fuchs, Klaus Demmer, and Marcelino Vidal with Latin American moral theology, especially liberation theology.

⁹ For a recent summary treatment of Sobrino's theology of discipleship, see Javier Alonso Castro C., "El absoluto moral en la reflexión cristológica de Jon Sobrino," *Theologica xaveriana* 47 (enero–abril 1997) 55–64. See also Jon Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1987) 135–37.

¹⁰ Moreno Rejon would add: one does not simply ask how to be good in this "perfectible" society but rather how to be good transforming this unjust society ("Moral fundamental" 282).

novelty, their problematic nature, or the promise they hold for moral theology.

Today, virtually all moral theologians in Latin America locate solidarity at the center of their ethic. For example, without abandoning a liberation perspective, Miguel Yáñez of Argentina proposes “*a new model based on the category of solidarity*.”¹¹ Solidarity moves to center stage, for one thing, because it responds to the individualism and competitiveness of an increasingly pervasive liberal ethos. Secondly, it responds to social and economic exclusion: Whereas early liberation theology emphasized the economic dependency of Latin America on rich countries, today, whether or not they consider that general diagnosis valid (many do), virtually all moral theologians stress the importance of the widespread social and economic exclusion generated by the “new economy” with its neoliberal adjustment programs over the last 20 years. Thirdly, solidarity seems to many to translate love as described in the New Testament into contemporary Latin American culture. Finally, since recent ecclesiastical documents stress solidarity, even highly conservative Catholic currents now use that language.¹² However else we may characterize it, Latin American moral theology is everywhere a theology of solidarity. We return to this theme later in our article.

Several additional developments are also widespread in moral theology. Many call for consolidating the postconciliar renewal of moral theology with a greater emphasis on freedom. There have been advances in developing a philosophical grounding for theological ethics. New attention has been directed to issues such as neoliberal economics, Catholic social teaching, women, the environment, bioethics, human rights, and foreign debt. Culture and ethnicity receive more attention than in the past, in particular, African American and indigenous reality. We will review most of these topics, devoting more attention to some than to others.

CONSOLIDATING POSTCONCILIAR RENEWAL

Many moralists recognize the need to consolidate the more personalist approach of postconciliar moral theology in Latin America where authoritarian culture still marks both church and society. Brazilian Antonio Moser recently appraised the past 50 years of mainly European postconciliar re-

¹¹ H. Miguel Yáñez, *Esperanza y solidaridad: Una fundamentación antropológico-teológica de la moral cristiana en la obra de Juan Alfaro* (Madrid: Universidad Pontificia Católica de Comillas, 1999) 30; emphasis in original. See also his, “Jalones para fundamentar una ética de la solidaridad esperante,” *Stromata* 56 (2000) 1–26, at 8.

¹² See “The Path to Solidarity,” chapter 5, “Ecclesia in America,” *Origins* 28 (February 4, 1999) 565–92, at 582–83.

newal.¹³ He celebrates the retrieval of fundamental biblical symbols: covenant, reign of God, and the following of Jesus which stresses love, mercy, and the enthusiasm of the Beatitudes over law, duty, and punitive justice.¹⁴ Still, while his assessment is mainly positive, Moser observes that this theology deals more with the “short” social relations of friendship and sexual intimacy than with the “long” relations of institutional life or the relations of humans to the non-human environment. It takes psychology and cultural anthropology more seriously than social sciences or environmental science. Moser also regrets the absence of a “dialectical perspective of a society in conflict and, above all, the perspective of the poor.”¹⁵ This leads to a failure to call for deep social transformations. Finally, ecumenical and interreligious collaboration has been meager.¹⁶

Fellow Brazilian Márcio Fabri dos Anjos calls for a decisive break from legalist casuistry. He points to the gap between official morality and popular morality. Without falling into a crude pragmatism, writes Anjos, it is also necessary to avoid insisting on abstract norms “without at least asking ourselves if they ‘work’.”¹⁷ While moral theology speaks of limit cases, realism forces us to admit that most people in Latin America and throughout the world have been living in limit situations of poverty for many years. Theologians need to listen to the victims in “exceptional situations” such as the oppressed and homosexuals. They must listen to women who are urging that ethical argument incorporate reasons of the heart, and pursue a more holistic approach that overcomes body-soul dualisms and patriarchal modes of doing ethics. Today’s pluralism demands a more participatory approach to developing ethical principles.¹⁸

Anjos fears that liberation theology’s insistence on social commitment may have reinforced the image of a divine Taskmaster.¹⁹ Belgian born José Comblin, also working in Brazil, concurs, arguing the need for a theology of personal freedom to replace overemphasis on personal sin. Comblin criticizes recent church documents and liberation theology for failing to supply this need: “The greatest reproach that can be made against liberation theology is that it has not devoted enough attention to the true drama

¹³ Antonio Moser, “Moral renovada aos cinquenta anos,” *Revista Eclesiástica Brasileira* 60 (2000) 557–77.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 564.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 573–74.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 574, 576. Moser has also written an excellent book on sin, treating the various aspects of the subject biblically, historically, and systematically and with attention to the cultural context from which symbols and concepts of sin emerge. See his, *O pecado: do descrédito ao aprofundamento* (Petropolis: Vozes, 1996).

¹⁷ Márcio Fabri dos Anjos, “Encruzilhadas da ética teológica hoje,” in *Teologia e novos paradigmas* (São Paulo: Soter e Loyola, 1996). We cite the Spanish translation, “Encruzijadas de la ética teológica actual,” in *Teología y nuevos paradigmas* (Bilbao: Mensajero, 1999) 175–94, at 185.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 185–86.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 193.

of human persons, to their destiny, to their vocation, and consequently to the ground of the issue of freedom.”²⁰

In *Called for Freedom* Comblin sketches how he would develop this theology whose deep roots stretch back to Paul and John. He concludes that a “true liberation of the ‘self’ lies at the very heart of all specific liberation struggles.”²¹

NEOLIBERALISM AND THE MARKET

The gravest moral problem of Latin America is poverty and structural inequality. This has economic, political, social, and cultural dimensions. The new high-tech economy and the globalization of market-relations and communications are not only reshaping local economies but also reconfiguring the relationship involving the economy, the state, and civil society in Latin America.

In 1996 the major superiors of the Jesuits in Latin America issued a letter and an accompanying study document on neoliberalism in the continent.²² These circulated widely. The study document defines neoliberalism as “a radical conception of capitalism that tends to absolutize the market and transform it into the means, the method, and the end of all intelligent and rational human behavior. . . . This absolute market disallows regulation in any area.”²³ Often associated with the Reagan and Thatcher governments, this model of capitalism has been promoted in Latin America since 1980, especially by multilateral lending agencies such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Through them, the industrial powers imposed “structural adjustment” programs as a condition for debt relief and for loans in general. The so-called “Washington consensus” of policy principles behind this model broke down in the late 1990s in the wake of the Asian and Mexican financial crises.

²⁰ José Comblin, *Called for Freedom: The Changing Context of Liberation Theology*, trans. Phillip Berryman (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1998) 197. A further example of this, as Carlos Novoa notes, is that liberation theology has given little attention to the problem of conscience (*Seguimiento histórico* 197–99).

²¹ Comblin, *Called for Freedom* 201.

²² We quote from the English translation of the letter (Latin American Provincials of the Society of Jesus, “Neo-liberalism in Latin America”) and the study-document (“Contributions to a Common Reflection”) in *Promotio justitiae* (Jesuit Social Secretariat, Rome) 67 (1997) 43–47 and 47–60. Argentine philosopher Carlos Hoevel has recently provided a clear account of how a globalizing world economy has affected Latin America (see his: “Globalization Seen from the South,” *Communio* 27 [2000] 511–31). He criticizes the major approaches to neoliberalism, but his own recommendations are cryptic.

²³ Jesuit Provincials, “Contributions” 48.

The Jesuit documents articulate views that are widely held in Christian circles; all of the moral theologians we have studied on the subject share their general perspective. According to this “Latin consensus,” the market is a useful, even necessary means for stimulating production and allocating resources. However, in the “new economy,” overreliance on the market has aggravated social inequality, further concentrated wealth and income, and left millions mired in misery. The principal social division is now no longer between capital and industrial labor but between those who are integrated into the market and those excluded from it. Governments have abandoned functions that are necessary to protect the weak and the environment and to ensure the common good. Struggling local businesses have gone bankrupt as controls over foreign investment were lifted. Financial speculation has destabilized entire national economies. New economic relations have torn society apart, generating unemployment, crime, and corruption as well as displacing rural and indigenous populations.

Most theologians would also agree that neoliberal policies reflect “a culture founded upon a conception of the human person and society incompatible with the values of the gospel.”²⁴ For, by aggressively marketing not only consumerism but also individualism and exaggerated competition, neoliberalism undermines spiritual, communitarian, and family values.

Latin American theologians have no simple formulas for an alternative society. However, most would agree on the goal of a society “in which no one remains excluded from work and from access to basic goods necessary to achieve personal fulfilment . . . [a] society which respects [local] cultural traditions . . . [a] democratic society, structured in a participatory manner.”²⁵

While this general diagnosis and goal constitute common ground, theologians occupy different places on it. We distinguish here between those who are more skeptical of the market, more influenced by Marx and critical social science, more sensitive to the obstacles posed by entrenched class interests, and those who are less fearful of market forces and more reliant on Catholic social teaching. The former group tends to favor transforming society, the latter reforming it.

Social Transformation: Gospel and Critical Social Theory

One of those calling for transformation is Enrique Dussel, an Argentine living in Mexico. Dussel’s *Ética de la liberación en la edad de la globalización y de la exclusión* is a 600-page foundation-argument for liberation

²⁴ Jesuit Provincials, “Neo-liberalism” 43.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 45–46.

ethics.²⁶ Even though it is a work of philosophy and not at all confined to the critique of the market economy, we want to indicate its importance here. For Dussel is a theologian as well as a philosopher, and this book marks a major advance in his thought.²⁷ It will surely have an impact on theological ethics and is directly relevant to the ethical evaluation of economic systems.²⁸

Dussel bases his ethics on an initial tripod of criteria. He develops both a material and a formal foundation for ethical obligations and then adds the requirement that such obligations be practically feasible. The first criterion (the material criterion) is the obligation to seek the “production, reproduction and development” of each human life in community.²⁹ Fostering life, in its multifaceted richness, is the truth-criterion for ethics.³⁰ The second (the formal criterion) is the criterion of validity. It specifies that the intermediate ethical principles by which the material principle is applied must take into account the views of all affected parties, as the discourse ethics of thinkers such as K. O. Apel and J. Habermas requires.³¹ (By affirming both a material and a formal criterion, Dussel rejects single-principle ethical systems: both materialistic reductionisms such as Nietzsche’s vitalism and formal reductionisms such as Kant’s ethic.) Third, ethical proposals must be feasible. It makes no sense to demand a planned economy that is technically, economically, politically, or culturally impossible. It is necessary to use “instrumental reason” to determine the adequate means to desired ends.³² According to these three general principles, action is ethical when it seeks to produce and develop human life

²⁶ Enrique Dussel, *Ética de la liberación en la edad de la globalización y de la exclusión* (Madrid: Trotta, 1998). In English, see *Thinking from the Underside of History: Enrique Dussel's Philosophy of Liberation*, ed. Linda Martín Alcoff and Eduardo Mendieta (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000).

²⁷ Carlos Beorlegui calls it “without doubt a true work of maturity . . . the crowning-work of all his previous theoretical efforts” (“La nueva ética de la liberación de E. Dussel,” *Realidad* 72 [1999] 689–729, at 689).

²⁸ See another recent work of philosophical ethics: Jordi Corominas Escudé, *Ética primera: Aportación de X. Zubiri al debate ético contemporáneo* (Bilbao: Desclée de Brouwer, 2000). Corominas, who until recently worked in El Salvador, develops the thinking of Basque philosopher Xavier Zubiri who has influenced liberation theology.

²⁹ Dussel, *Ética de la liberación* 132, 140. Here Dussel draws on Marx and Franz Hinkelammert. He holds that Marx’s entire project is implicitly ethical (ibid. 326, 382 n. 63).

³⁰ Enrique Dussel, “Principles, Mediations, and the ‘Good’ as Synthesis,” *Philosophy Today: Supplement* (1997) 55–66, at 58.

³¹ Dussel, *Ética de la liberación* 214. An act “is ‘valid’ . . . if it is intersubjectively ‘accepted’ by a community of communication” (Dussel, “Principles” 55).

³² Dussel, “Epilogue,” in *Thinking from the Underside of History: Enrique Dussel's Philosophy of Liberation* 269–89, at 273.

most adequately (in its non-human environment) and to foster social participation.³³

However, Dussel does not consider these general criteria sufficient. In the second half of his book, he applies liberation methodology, developing three parallel “critical” principles from the perspective of history’s victims. First, one recognizes the dignity of the victims whose lives are truncated or destroyed.³⁴ This leads to the insight that, for them, what is “good” and “valid” according to prevailing ethical standards (the reigning *Sittlichkeit*) is actually evil and invalid. This in turn leads to assuming coresponsibility for the victim. Second, the victims, excluded from decision making, need to unmask the dominant ethical discourse and elaborate an ethic that will address the causes of their oppression and aim toward a society without victims.³⁵ Finally, what this new “liberation ethics” proposes must be practically feasible.³⁶

As for capitalism, Dussel concludes that it violates the three critical principles: far from defending life, it excludes the majority from the banquet table as well as from the discussion table where decisions are taken regarding who lives and who dies. Finally, it uses instrumental rationality in service of partial interests. Dussel therefore calls not for reform of the system but for its transformation into a different kind of society. This does not necessarily mean “revolution,” since conditions for revolution occur only rarely, and Dussel recognizes that ethics should be useful even when those conditions do not obtain, as is the case today.³⁷

Dussel is part of a group of theologians who have long criticized capitalism on theological grounds. Another is Korean-born Brazilian Jung Mo Sung. Sung recently called attention to the fact that the most widely read liberation theologians fail to treat economic themes.³⁸ This contrasts sharply with the early years of liberation theology. In particular, according to Sung, theologians fail to criticize economics in theological terms. He argues that overcoming this situation depends on recognizing, with Franz Hinkelammert, that modernity is characterized not so much by secularization as by displacement of the sacred. Both the bourgeois capitalist project and the Marxist socialist project promise an earthly salvation and sacrifice

³³ See James L. Marsh, “Principles in Dussel’s Ethics,” *ibid.* 51–67, at 57.

³⁴ This idea, long central to Dussel’s thought, derives from E. Lévinas, *Totalité et infini: Essai sur l’extériorité* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1961).

³⁵ Enrique Dussel, “Globalization and the Victims of Exclusion: From a Liberation Ethics Perspective,” *Modern Schoolman* 75 (January 1998) 119–55, at 148.

³⁶ Dussel’s arguments establishing the material and formal criteria draw on the work of Franz Hinkelammert (see below).

³⁷ Dussel, *Ética de la liberación* 525–38.

³⁸ Jung Mo Sung, *Economía: Tema ausente en la teología de la liberación* (San José, Costa Rica: DEI, 1994).

victims to their respective idols: the market and central planning. While modern social theory justifies these projects “scientifically,” they are actually charged with religious pretensions.³⁹

Sung criticizes the “anti-capitalist romanticism”⁴⁰ of theologians who register moral indignation at widespread misery and then naively appeal to distributive justice. What is necessary, he says, is to analyze and evaluate theologically the mechanisms of production, distribution, and consumption, as well as the theories (of Weber, Popper, von Hayek, etc.) that justify free-market capitalism. This is the kind of theology being produced by the Costa Rica-based Hinkelammert, Dussel, and Brazilians Hugo Assmann, Julio de Santa Ana, and Rubem Alves. Sung complains that most other liberation theologians seem to ignore them.

Like other Latin American theologians, but more systematically than most, Hinkelammert takes up the Frankfurt School critique of the modern economic theory that employs only instrumental rationality. That is, mainstream economics seeks merely the adequate means to already given ends, assuming that ends to be pursued are not the object of science but of personal taste. On principle, economic theory prescind from the goal of reproducing life. In practice, says Hinkelammert, neoclassical price theory ends up measuring “wants” or “preferences,” while ignoring vital needs. Meanwhile, the reigning values of the unfettered market—efficiency and competition—lead to human and environmental destruction. According to Hinkelammert, we are efficiently sawing off the limb on which we sit. This is a scientific judgment of fact, not a value judgment, which economic science nonetheless excludes on principle.⁴¹ However, it is imperative to opt for life, against annihilation. “The decision not to commit suicide,” he contends, “grounds every possible ethic”⁴² and invalidates any social project that would lead to the elimination of the participants.⁴³

Hinkelammert concludes that the instrumental rationality of price theory must be subordinated to the wider rationality that seeks to reproduce life. What Marx called “exchange-value” (market-value measured by price) must be subordinated to “use-value” (utility in producing life). The challenge is to combine neoclassical price theory with the rationality that

³⁹ Ibid. 207. Sung further develops these themes in his, “Contribución de la teología en la lucha contra la exclusión social,” *Persona y Sociedad* (Santiago de Chile) 11, no. 3 (Dec. 1997) 23–39. His application of René Girard’s concept of “mimetic desire” to the market is especially suggestive.

⁴⁰ Sung, *Economía* 100.

⁴¹ Franz J. Hinkelammert, *El mapa del emperador: Determinismo, caos, sujeto* (San José, Costa Rica: DEI, 1996) chapter 1.

⁴² Franz J. Hinkelammert, *Cultura de la esperanza y sociedad sin exclusión* (San José, Costa Rica: DEI, 1995) 322.

⁴³ Hinkelammert, *El mapa* 167.

seeks to reproduce life, thus submitting the market to vital needs. Most other Latin American theologians would agree with this conclusion. For Hinkelammert, unlike many others, it implies transformation to a “non-capitalist market society.”⁴⁴

In a market-dominated society, he adds, actions have unintended consequences that “fall back on the actors themselves and exercise a compulsive effect over them.”⁴⁵ For Marx, real autonomy—and, for Hinkelammert, survival—requires “dissolving” these forces. Hinkelammert’s solution is action-in-solidarity (*acción solidaria*).

He agrees with the Zapatistas of Chiapas that the goal must be a society in which everyone has a place. Like the prohibition against suicide, this is a negative norm that does not depend on a particular theory of the good life or a particular strategy for getting there. It implies: “thou shalt not seek the good life in such a way as to deny others the possibility of living.”⁴⁶ Hinkelammert rejects as impossible any a priori deterministic solution of the right or left as well as any definitive earthly solution. The task is to struggle continually, “by means of associative and solidary action,”⁴⁷ to order market relations and achieve enough freedom so that all human beings can live and nature thrive. Only action-in-solidarity and institutions-of-solidarity (e.g. democracy) can “dissolve” the destructive and constraining forces produced by the market-mechanisms.

Solidarity is based on the recognition of others, especially the victim. Following Levinas, Hinkelammert translates the command to love one’s neighbor as oneself: “Love your neighbor; you are that neighbor.” That is, recognize yourself in the neighbor to lose yourself in solidarity is to find yourself.⁴⁸

Brazilian Hugo Assmann agrees that the great challenge is to combine solidarity with an “economy-with-market.”⁴⁹ He prefers this expression to “market economy,” arguing for democratically determined policies to circumscribe the operations of the market so that everyone’s basic needs can be satisfied. According to Assmann, this requires rethinking what is meant by “ethical subject,” both personal and social. For once we appreciate how our actions are embedded in self-regulating systems that produce vast unintended consequences, we see that “[t]he traditional moral and judicial

⁴⁴ Ibid. chapter 3, at 106.

⁴⁵ Hinkelammert, *El mapa* 243. For this and the following paragraph, see *Cultura de la esperanza*, part 3, chapter 4, and *El mapa*, chapter 3.

⁴⁶ Hinkelammert, *Cultura de la esperanza* 313.

⁴⁷ Hinkelammert, *El mapa* 259.

⁴⁸ Ibid. 260–66.

⁴⁹ Hugo Assmann, “Temas-chave para um referencial ético-político: Corporeidade—sujeito—mercado,” *Revista Eclesiástica Brasileira* 57 (1997) 265–87, at 268. This article presents new themes as well as several developed by Assmann in earlier works.

theory concerning *human acts* . . . is totally insufficient.”⁵⁰ Ethics can no longer simply focus on consciousness, or even social awareness (“conscientization”), since our “freedom and consciousness are inscribed . . . in complex self-organizing life-processes and highly self-regulating processes of the semi-autonomous spheres which make up the dynamic bio-socio-economic systems.”⁵¹

The usual approach to ethics leaves us unprepared to question the idea that the market and society operate as self-regulating organisms. According to liberal economic theory, occasional interventions are enough to restore free-market conditions that tend toward perfect equilibrium. Direct action to bring about social justice is therefore unnecessary. Thanks to Adam Smith’s “invisible hand,” we can all pursue our self-interest with a clear conscience. This “myth” leads to idolatry of the market, says Assmann, and the “kidnaping and inversion of the commandment of love of neighbor.”⁵²

The liberal myth presupposes that human beings are too egotistical to undertake a common project. The opposite extreme supposes that economic planning could channel natural generosity toward common prosperity. But since, in reality, humans both pursue their personal interests and also “remain open to claims of solidarity” at the same time, Assmann contends that any viable historical project “must take into account . . . the potential combination of these two defining elements of the human being.”⁵³

Therefore, we must combine ethics with the market. In Assmann’s view, metaphysics and religion can no longer win the necessary consensus to ground the social policy required for this. He proposes instead the principle of respect for the dignity of “living corporeality,” a concept that includes everyone’s bodies but extends to the biosocial systems of which humans are a part.

While this group of theologians accepts the market as necessary and even beneficial, it finds its unchecked logic pernicious. The group also recognizes that the goal of including everyone in the economy and in decision-making in some capacity will challenge the privilege of the few. Thus Hinkelammert’s ethic of solidarity is an ethic of resistance. Action-in-solidarity entails “continual and constant conflict,” since the tension between the market and the production of life for all is “the legitimate descendent of the class struggle.”⁵⁴ These themes find less emphasis in others who speak more the language of reform than that of transformation. They draw more on Catholic social teaching than critical social theory.

⁵⁰ Ibid. 270.

⁵² Ibid. 264.

⁵⁴ Hinkelammert, *El mapa* 258, 268.

⁵¹ Ibid. 280.

⁵³ Ibid. 285.

Social Reform: Gospel and Catholic Social Teaching

Both Tony Mifsud of Chile and Juan Carlos Scannone of Argentina have recently surveyed Catholic social teaching on the market economy.⁵⁵ Mifsud concludes his overview with several critical observations. Despite the benefits of markets, he says, a market economy ends up excluding the weak. For, by themselves, markets fail to distribute goods according to social needs. An economy whose definitive criterion is the law of supply and demand must be rejected for failing to help “all members of society to fulfill themselves as human persons.”⁵⁶

According to Mifsud, the success of an economic system ultimately consists in its ability to include all members of society in the process of production and its benefits. Therefore, when the common good requires it, public authority must intervene in the economy, even if this causes inefficiency. Redistribution may be more important in human terms. After all, intervention is readily accepted when financial capital is in crisis. Indeed, “with more equal conditions among the population, intervention is less necessary; but under less equal conditions, more intervention is necessary for redistributing the benefits society produces.”⁵⁷

Scannone is in basic agreement. Although he holds that Pius XI was correct not to condemn capitalism outright, he also believes that what Pius called “economic imperialism” is a present reality. He contends that the principle of subsidiarity ought to lead us today to “economic democracy,”⁵⁸ by which he means not a market economy with a social dimension, but a “social-economy guiding the market” and free of “hegemonic relations of social power.”⁵⁹

Of Latin American theologians, perhaps Scannone is the most specific in developing criteria for a more humane socioeconomic order. In another recent essay, he draws on Swiss ethicist Peter Ulrich to sketch the contours of “economic democracy.” Ulrich argues that economic theory must find its proper place within the ethical discourse of the community that economic policy actually affects—a position similar to Hinkelammert’s. Scannone characterizes this as a “Chalcedonian” relationship: ethics and economics

⁵⁵ Tony Mifsud, “Economía de mercado: Interrogantes éticos para una acción solidaria,” *Medellín* 22 (1996) 89–168; Juan Carlos Scannone, “Economía de mercado y doctrina social de la Iglesia: Aporte teológico desde y para América Latina,” *ibid.* 57–87.

⁵⁶ Mifsud, “Economía de mercado” 139.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 157.

⁵⁸ Scannone, “Economía de mercado” 63. He refers to *Quadragesimo anno* nos. 101–2, 109, and 79.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 82. See *Centesimus annus* no. 52.

are distinct but inseparable.⁶⁰ He also agrees with Ulrich that personal capital (my house) and institutional capital (stock corporations) should be treated differently, both juridically and ethically. Especially when an enterprise profoundly affects the wider community, all affected (stakeholders) should have a say in defining the parameters of its operations, while at the same time permitting both efficient management and profits.⁶¹

Scannone has not pulled these theories in from outer space. He comes as close as anyone to observing Dussel's feasibility-principle by observing where an alternative economy might actually be emerging in Latin America. Scannone sees this happening at two levels which he considers complementary. First, he sees efforts (which he does not specify, however) to have the market operate within an ethical and juridical framework—something many European Christian and Social Democrats favored following World War II.

Second, a “grassroots economy of solidarity with a democratic market”⁶² is growing in both the formal and informal economies in Latin America. Its participants include cooperatives, worker-owned enterprises, and other forms of associative property. Many such enterprises are meeting the challenge of efficiency and competitiveness thanks to what Chilean economist Luis Razeto calls the “C” factor (for “community”),⁶³ which Razeto treats as a central element of economic reality, along with labor, capital and technology.

How Much Market?

All Latin theologians recognize the need to circumscribe the market with juridical instruments that can insure some democratic accountability, include all citizens in the economy and ensure universal satisfaction of basic needs. Some stress that this will involve conflict and eventually lead not beyond the market, but beyond capitalism. Unfortunately, no one sees an alternative society on the horizon.

⁶⁰ J. C. Scannone, “Hacia la transformación comunicativa de la racionalidad económica,” in *Ética y economía: Economía de mercado, neoliberalismo y ética de la gratuidad*, ed. J. C. Scannone and Gerardo Remolina (Buenos Aires: Bonum, 1998) 147–84. See P. Ulrich, *Transformation der ökonomischen Vernunft: Fortschrittsperspektiven der modernen Industriegesellschaft*, 3rd ed. (Bern-Stuttgart: 1993).

⁶¹ This follows the fundamental criterion of the discourse-ethic of Apel and Habermas. Compare Dean Brackley, *Ética social cristiana: Textos de la doctrina social católica, ensayos bíblicos y comentarios* (San Salvador: UCA, 1996) 159–62.

⁶² Scannone, “Economía y mercado” 85.

⁶³ On the C-factor, see Gaspar F. Lo Biondo, “Ética, educación popular económica y solidaridad,” in *Ética y economía* 428–32. For bibliography on such economic alternatives, see *ibid.* 168 n. 20 and n. 21.

POLITICS, CIVIL SOCIETY, AND CULTURE

The challenge of combining ethics with the market raises the issue of the government's role in the economy. Advocating intervention in the economy is problematic because of the prevailing neoliberal ideology, the ineffectiveness of Keynesian policies in a globalized economy, and the crisis of legitimacy that affects all parties and governments as the media continually expose official corruption and venality.

As government has lost its luster over the last 20 years, at the same time Latin America has experienced a burgeoning of civil society, that is, of those groups that are "intermediate" between the individual (or the family) and the state. Civil society has become the locus of many grassroots efforts for change and the focus of reflection. To understand its significance, one must attend closely to evolving social relations, customs and the values these embody, in short to culture.

Politics and Government

Moral theologians urge more government guidance of the economy, but many insist on the accountability of the state to civil society. Aware of the historic weakness of Latin American governments, Comblin argues for building a lean but strong social-welfare state and a joint public-private industrial strategy.⁶⁴ This, however, is the long-term goal. At the same time, Comblin and others recognize Latin America's impotence vis-à-vis the rich nations of the North. Miguel Manzanera of Bolivia writes that "The present international political structure . . . contradicts the ethical principles of the universal destiny of goods and of democracy itself."⁶⁵ Emilio Albistur of Argentina recalls how recent papal documents and CELAM's Medellín Conference treated growing asymmetrical relations among nations and that Pope John XXIII, recognizing the insufficiency of nation-states to ensure the universal common good, called for a "general public authority" as a moral necessity.⁶⁶ Without such authority, regional cooperation is stunted and local governments cannot ensure the common good.

⁶⁴ "The biggest political problem in Latin America is the weakness of the state" (Comblin, *Called for Freedom* 123; see 116–18 and chapter 6 passim). Comblin accepts the proposals of the influential work by Jorge Castañeda, *Utopia Unarmed: The Latin American Left after the Cold War* (New York: Knopf, 1993).

⁶⁵ Miguel Manzanera, "Crítica filosófica del neoliberalismo (II)," in *Ética y economía* 77–145, at 123.

⁶⁶ Emilio A. Albistur, "Globalizar la solidaridad: Desafío para la pastoral y la doctrina social de la Iglesia," *CIAS* [Centro de Investigación y Acción Social] 48 (1999) 13–33. See *Pacem in terris* no. 137.

Civil Society and Culture

With little change possible soon at the national or international level, Latin Americans look with more hope to the local level. Since democratic progress is more feasible there, Comblin writes, “The immediate [political] objective is to form grassroots civil society.”⁶⁷

Civil society has burgeoned in Latin America partly in reaction to new economic realities. We have already mentioned the emerging economy-of-solidarity. Actually, this as part of a wider phenomenon that includes the growth of organized groups of neighbors, women, students, workers, indigenous people, Afro-Americans, environmentalists, defenders of human rights, consumers and others, including religious groups and every sort of non-government organization. Scannone characterizes this continent-wide phenomenon as neo-communitarian⁶⁸ (not to be confused with the “communitarianism” of recent U.S. social theory). Especially among the poor, these groups struggle for life with dignity, sometimes in alliance with groups abroad that form part of what Pedro Trigo calls “the pro-life international.”⁶⁹

Latin American theologians admit having misread the reality of the poor in the 1970s and 1980s. Instead of awakening to assume their historic role as subject of social transformation, the poor embraced the relative freedom of urban life, with all its ambiguities.⁷⁰ Many theologians now point out the “complexity” of the reality of the poor. The crisis of socialism and the recent growth of civil society have focused attention on how people organize their daily lives, on social relations (including neighborhood, gender, family, work, and economic relations), aspirations, customs, and values, in a word, culture—that complex reality neglected by both the liberal right and the Marxist left. As culture has taken on new importance relative to economics and politics, theologians and pastoral agents seek to understand better how the poor make sense out of their lives and elaborate a variety of life-projects and liberation strategies. This is crucial for moral theology as well as to social change. According to Anjos, the poor remain culturally “the others,” a group that moral theology must confront.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Comblin, *Called for Freedom* 137.

⁶⁸ J. C. Scannone, “El futuro de la reflexión teológica en América Latina: El comunitarismo como alternativa viable,” *Stromata* 53 (1997) 13–43.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* 24.

⁷⁰ See Simón Pedro Arnold, “Norte—Sur: Exclusión de los pobres,” *Páginas* 151 (1998) 50–56. The poor have thus left militants and theologians “orphaned” (54).

⁷¹ Anjos, “Encrucijadas” 188–91. See also García Durán, “Teología moral” 78. According to Eduardo Sota of Mexico, the Church took “a Christian ethic incarnated in a Greco-Roman cultural horizon and exported [it] as ‘the Christian ethic’.”

Latin America is in the throes of cultural change. Until recently most people were socialized into traditional rural cultures. The majority now grow up in cities, where a more pluralistic liberal ethos prevails. Add to that the spectacular growth of the media-culture and widespread migration and travel. The result is pluralism and the crisis of traditional authorities, generational conflict, identity crises, and moral confusion. Several authors have contrasted the values of traditional and liberal culture and have described the contours of postmodern Latin American culture and a “radical” or liberation ethos.⁷²

Young people, especially, live a hybrid culture. According to Argentine Jesuit Jorge Seibold, “the ‘urban social imagination’ . . . contains in greater or less degree at least three fundamental components or determinations: the traditional, the modern and the postmodern.”⁷³ Family, community, and custom predominate in the traditional ethos that values life, order, and transcendence. Individual freedom and efficiency characterize the modern liberal ethos. The fragmented postmodern or post-Enlightenment ethos tends toward moral cynicism and superficiality, but it also registers a healthy protest, in the name of authenticity, against the anti-values of traditionalism and modernity.⁷⁴

Scannone believes that the new movements of civil society represent a kind of “reflexive, posttraditional modernization” that augurs a new ethos. Though often “beyond left and right” and postmodern in style, they retrieve traditional communitarian values in the face of competitive individualism.⁷⁵ In some cases, however, they embody a radical or liberation ethos that is participatory and democratic rather than authoritarian.⁷⁶

Although traditional society is in crisis, the generous, communitarian

imposing Western norms on indigenous Americans (Eduardo E. Sota García, “Ética cristiana y cultura,” *Voces* 10 [1997] 89–93, at 93. See also Humberto Encarnación Anizar, “Cristianismo e integración cultural en México frente a la cultura de la desigualdad,” *ibid.* 103–11).

⁷² See Jorge Seibold, “Ciudadanía, transformación educativa e imaginario social urbano: La problemática actual de los valores ante el desafío de la regionalización y el impacto de la globalización,” *Stromata* 55 (1999) 53–89, at 59. This article has a bibliography of Seibold’s earlier essays on this theme. See also Dean Brackley, “A Radical Ethos,” *Horizons* 24 (Spring 1997) 7–36; Gustavo Gutiérrez, “Desafíos de la postmodernidad,” *Páginas* 162 (2000) 36–47; Comblin, *Called for Freedom*, chapter 7; Nilo Agostini, *Teología moral: entre o pessoal e o social* (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1995) part 1.

⁷³ Seibold, “Ciudadanía” 59–60.

⁷⁴ Jorge R. Seibold, “Imaginario social, trabajo y educación: Su problemática actual en medios populares del Gran Buenos Aires,” in *Ética y economía* 369–408.

⁷⁵ Scannone, “El futuro” 34. The quoted phrases echo the thought of British sociologist Anthony Giddens.

⁷⁶ Brackley, “A Radical Ethos” 26–34.

spirit of the countryside may not suffer the fate of the yoke of oxen and the weaver's loom. In 1998 a group of Latin American Jesuit philosophers (some of whom are also theologians) published a collection of essays entitled *Ética y economía: Economía de mercado, neoliberalismo y ética de la gratuidad*⁷⁷ which explores the relationship of the market to two values that are central to Latin American cultures. The authors call these "we-ness" (*nostridad*) and "gratuitousness" (*gratuidad*). An elemental sense of solidarity ("we") and habits of mutual giving and receiving, with a minimum of calculation, are deeply rooted in Latin cultures and contrast with the logic of the market. *Nostridad* and *gratuidad* generate a rationality at odds with the values of liberal modernity, with its individualism, competitiveness, instrumental rationality, and market-logic.⁷⁸ The group nevertheless believes that the two logics can be made complementary and that joining them in practice is a fundamental ethical challenge.

Nostridad and *gratuidad* are not simply two cultural idiosyncracies. They arise out of the human condition itself. In that case, competitive individualism rests on a flawed anthropology. Antonio Ocaña of Uruguay invites us to "open our eyes to the breadth of the field of gratuitousness" since we have inherited all of nature and the public works of culture for free. He also points out how gratuitousness is highly efficacious and efficient in a way that recalls Razeto's C-factor.⁷⁹

It seems to us that theologians are correct to focus on civil society as the locus of change, and of hope, even though its micro-initiatives face enormous obstacles, and the strong, lean state appears nowhere on the horizon. Conservatives appeal to the principle of subsidiarity to justify privatization and the shrinking of government, exaggerating subsidiarity at the expense of the common good.⁸⁰

We have not seen any sustained treatment of the principle of subsidiarity

⁷⁷ See n. 60 above. We have already referred to this volume, the fifth in an ongoing series. For the first four, see Vicente Santuc, "Presentación de los libros del Equipo jesuita latinoamericano de reflexión filosófica," *Stromata* 54 (1998) 303–11. A sixth volume on politics appeared in 1999.

⁷⁸ The group developed the idea of gratuitousness in its second volume, *Irrupción del pobre y quehacer filosófico: Hacia una nueva racionalidad* (Buenos Aires: Bonum, 1993). It reflected on *nostridad*, a "we-anthropology," especially as reflected among the Guaraní, in its third publication, *Hombre y sociedad: Reflexiones filosóficas desde América Latina* (Bogotá: Universidad Javeriana, 1995). See B. Melià, "La comunidad de comunicación en K.-O. Apel y en la filosofía guaraní," *ibid.* 23–26; M. Manzanera, "Metafísica de la nostridad: Hacia una filosofía de la liberación como nostrificación," *ibid.* 91–130.

⁷⁹ Antonio Ocaña, "Interés: gratuidad y ley," in *Ética y economía* 227–313.

⁸⁰ See José Carlos Fernández-Cid, "Solidaridad: La carreta atascada y nuestra responsabilidad," *Senderos* [San José, Costa Rica: ITAC] 22 (2000) 97–128, at 105–6.

in recent Latin American moral theology. It is worth recalling here that recent versions of the principle⁸¹ affirm government's role in enabling the participation of citizens and groups as "adult" social agents, not mere recipients of the social product. In properly applying the principle of subsidiarity, however, it would also be necessary to take into account, more than Catholic social teaching usually does, the conflictive inequality that characterizes civil society in places such as Latin America. The principle of subsidiarity itself demands government action to defend weak economic actors against unfair competition.

THE EFFICACY AND CREDIBILITY OF THE MESSAGE

Short-term prospects for change in Latin America are few. In view of the obstacles, some theologians ask about the credibility of the Church's message and its efficacy.

In 1998 Pope John Paul II issued the postsynodal apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in America* after the Synod of America was held in 1997. The document called for broad diffusion of Catholic social teaching and proposed the elaboration of a "social catechism." José Oscar Beozzo of São Paulo has recently offered suggestions for that project.⁸² He suggests that such a catechism adopt the see-judge-act method that proved so fruitful at Vatican II in *Gaudium et spes*, as well as in the CELAM documents of the Latin American episcopal conference such as the Medellín document (1968) and the Puebla document (1979). "See" means examining the "signs of the times" and using social science to interpret them. "Judge" means to letting God's Word and church teaching illuminate that reality, especially the sufferings and hopes of the poor. This leads to practical orientations and commitments, "act."

Beozzo suggests the social catechism treat most of the social themes treated in *Ecclesia in America*, most of which have already been mentioned in this article. In responding to environmental destruction, he suggests that Christians learn from indigenous communities. He proposes collaboration between the churches in South and North America in addressing international issues such as financial speculation and debt, migration, and drug trafficking. Beozzo also proposes adopting the participatory methods (consulting broadly and publishing preliminary drafts) used by the U.S. Catholic bishops in drafting their pastorals on peace, economic justice, and women during the 1980s.

Ricardo Antoncich of Peru has recently called attention to new, unmet

⁸¹ E.g., *Centesimus annus* no. 48.

⁸² José Oscar Beozzo, "Algumas sugestões par uma doutrina social da Igreja no continente americano," *Revista Eclesiástica Brasileira* 60 (2000) 605–18.

challenges of Catholic social teaching, such as the meaning of labor rights in robotized production, property rights to the means of communication that are increasingly monopolized, and the ability of financial speculators to “de-finance” nations overnight.⁸³ But Antoncich is also concerned about the effectiveness of church teaching. He celebrates the pope’s personal involvement in addressing the foreign debt problem as a good example of what is needed. He also argues that, while the Church needs to ground this teaching in faith-language, it must get beyond abstract natural law doctrine if it wishes to address those outside the fold. Antoncich recommends the approach of Spanish philosopher Adela Cortina. She combines a “minimal ethic” in the discourse-ethic tradition of Apel and Habermas, which can make universal claims based on reason, with a eudaimonistic “maximal ethic” based on religious or other value commitments. However, Antoncich believes that a Christian “maximal” ethic will win adherents today chiefly by virtue of “*the testimony of a happy life*.”⁸⁴ He laments the fact that the institutional Church has failed to acknowledge the many heroic witnesses, even martyrs, to the values espoused by its own social teaching.

Antonio González, in Guatemala, proposes a more global solution to injustice and to the problem of credibility. He contends that liberation theology, like all of modernity, has underestimated the depth of sin and exaggerated human potential for good. González argues that real justice is not a human work and cannot be brought about by taking state power and implementing a political program, however enlightened. Rather, justice is a divine work which comes about where God brings together people who, following Jesus’ teaching and example, live as equals and share their lives and possessions.⁸⁵ When they do that, their alternative form of life will attract others to join their experiment. This is the only path to justice. Since justice is God’s work, writes González, what is called for from human beings is faith, as Paul recognized. When people accept God’s offer in faith, the Spirit enables them to live as brothers and sisters, fulfilling their role as salt of the earth and light of the world.

González draws on the biblical studies of German brothers Norbert and Gerhard Lohfink and the American John Howard Yoder. His vision, and theirs, retrieves the legacy not only of the early Church, but also of the radical wing of the Reformation (Mennonites, Moravians, Quakers) that is itself heir to medieval “spiritual” movements and that is continued by

⁸³ Ricardo Antoncich. “La doctrina social de la Iglesia ante desafíos del tercer milenio,” *Páginas* 166 (2000) 6–20.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 16; emphasis in original.

⁸⁵ Antonio González, *Teología de la praxis evangélica: Ensayo de una teología fundamental* (Santander: Sal Terrae, 1999) especially chapters 3–6. See also his “El evangelio de la fe y de la justicia,” *Revista Latinoamericana de Teología* 17 (2000) 167–90.

contemporary “radical evangelicals” and, in its own way, in the “Christian anarchism” of the Catholic Worker Movement.

Francisco Chamberlain, in Peru, has called attention to the “modern” temptation to solve complex social problems with simple solutions: the market alone (liberals), the state alone (the left), or civil society alone. According to Chamberlain, each is necessary but insufficient. This third temptation, “*basismo*,” afflicts many committed Christians who expect change to come only from the bottom up, from civil society. They fail to notice how Jesus sought to engage the non-poor and the authorities of his day.⁸⁶

González’s position resonates with those who seek social change from “below.” Does he fall into *basismo*? González would reply that he recognizes the place of a Joseph, a Daniel, or an Esther in the royal palace. Their role will be difficult, however, and of secondary importance. Even prophetic annunciation and denunciation are less important than evangelical renunciation of goods.⁸⁷ Communities of equals will attract others. That is how injustice is overcome. This is a refreshing contribution, we believe, provided the prophetic function of the Church, so fruitful in the obvious case of an Archbishop Romero, retains its centrality.

SOLIDARITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Latin American theologians have been using the concept “solidarity” since the late 1960s, but they avoided “rights” language until the mid-1980s.⁸⁸ Theologians, such as Juan Luis Segundo, Gustavo Gutiérrez, and José Comblin rarely mentioned rights in their early works.⁸⁹ Comblin explained why. Liberals adopted this language, but for them rights meant individual and political claims (e.g. to private property, free speech). For Latin American moral theology, however, rights meant primarily social and economic human rights articulated by the U. N. Declaration and Catholic social teaching (e.g., the right to an adequate standard of living and to form and join trade unions).⁹⁰ Some liberals ignored and sometimes persecuted those who defended such rights. Latin American moral theol-

⁸⁶ Francisco Chamberlain, “¿Cómo entendemos hoy el compromiso social y político?” *Páginas* 149 (1998) 13–19.

⁸⁷ González, “El evangelio” 187–88.

⁸⁸ Gustavo Gutiérrez, “Option for the Poor” in *Mysterium Liberationis* 239–40; and Jon Sobrino, “Communion, Conflict, and Ecclesial Solidarity,” *ibid.* 632–34.

⁸⁹ Juan Luis Segundo, *Signs of the Times: Theological Reflections*, ed. Alfred T. Hennelly (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1993) 53–66, at 64–66; and Franz J. Hinkelammert, *The Ideological Weapons of Death: A Theological Critique of Capitalism*, trans. Philip Berryman (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1986) 120.

⁹⁰ José Comblin, *Called for Freedom* 162.

ogy is no longer silent about human rights as can be seen in a number of articles occasioned by the 50th anniversary of the U.N. Universal Declaration in 1998. Mark Engler recently demonstrated that, beginning in the 1980s, liberation theologians brought “a thoroughgoing concern for the poor to human rights” and have insisted that this moral discourse should lead to a change of unjust social conditions.⁹¹

Latin American moral theology employs solidarity both as a banner to counter neoliberalism’s individualism that erodes the foundations of solidarity and as the nucleus of an ethic that integrates human rights and other values, including love, justice, freedom, and forgiveness. Some neoliberals fear that solidarity will upstage individual rights, writes Tony Mifsud, while certain Marxist thinkers suspect that this concept will smooth over class divisions. Moreover, some Catholics confuse solidarity with paternalistic assistance, such as almsgiving.⁹² And so Latin American moral theology tries to clarify the true meaning of solidarity and to show its importance for justice and human rights.

Theologians have made good progress in developing the theological and philosophical foundations of its ethic of solidarity.⁹³ Although the term “solidarity” arose in the 19th century, Carlos Villalobos has traced its theological roots back to the ancient Hebrew concept of corporate personality.⁹⁴ Antonio González shows how solidarity is deeply grounded in trinitarian relations.⁹⁵ Bernabé Lemus focuses on the christological roots of solidarity, contending that Jesus’ Incarnation and kenosis serve as the prime analog of solidarity and that Jesus is the unifying center of humanity who generates solidarity among the crucified people.⁹⁶

Mifsud speaks of solidarity as a communitarian vision of the person: the “I” is conceivable only within a network of relations with others, and so the

⁹¹ Mark Engler, “Toward the ‘Rights of the Poor’ 2000: Human Rights in Liberation Theology,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 28 (2000) 339–65, at 340.

⁹² Tony Mifsud, “La cultura de la solidaridad como proyecto ético,” *Theologica Xaveriana* 46 (oct.-dic. 1996) 345–56, at 348.

⁹³ Tony Mifsud, “Ética de los derechos humanos: una perspectiva cristiana,” *Medellín* 26 (2000) 321–54; Juan Luis Moyano Walker, “Ética y derechos humanos: Desde la mirada de las víctimas,” *CIAS* 50 (2001) 277–85; and Carlos Luis Custer, “El respeto de los derechos económicos y sociales en la época de la globalización,” *CIAS* 47 (1998) 312–20.

⁹⁴ *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary* 3: *Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary* 1–4, R. W. Burchfield (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987) s.v.; and Carlos A. Villalobos, “La solidaridad desde el concepto hebreo de personalidad corporativa de Israel,” *Senderos* 22 (2000) 13–44.

⁹⁵ Antonio González, *Trinidad y liberación: La teología de la liberación* (San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1994).

⁹⁶ Bernabé Sagastume Lemus, “Jesucristo y la solidaridad,” *Senderos* 22 (2000) 45–65; and Sobrino, “Communion” 634.

“I” implies a “we.” Conversely, only the configuration of the “we” permits the authentic realization of the “I.”⁹⁷ Writing about ecology from an ecofeminist perspective, Ivone Gebara from Brazil expands the meaning of the “I” by relating the person in his or her everyday life to the cosmos, people in other cultures, and individual persons.⁹⁸ Using the Trinity as metaphor, Gebara contends that the entire expanse of the universe possesses a unity in a multiplicity of relationships. One may observe, for example, a trinitarian structure in the human person who, even when in solitude, depends on and lives in communion with the environment (air and sun) and with persons who continue to touch the person’s inner life. This trinitarian-like structure prompts persons to listen to their inner voice as they embrace the multiplicity of persons and other creatures that pass through their lives. It also urges persons to act in ways that express reciprocity, communion, and equality. Gebara contrasts a solitude that is trinitarian and solidaristic with individualism in Western society. She thinks that a trinitarian anthropology can and should overcome an individualism that generates structures of economic competition and patterns of social exclusion.⁹⁹

Argentine Jesuit Miguel Yáñez has written a major study of the theological anthropology of Spaniard Juan Alfaro, a study that he believes provides a solid foundation for a Latin American based ethic of solidarity.¹⁰⁰ Solidarity and hope are the two key dimensions of human existence that can supply this foundation, says Yáñez. According to Alfaro, to be human is to be-in-relation to others: We become more human through social interaction, essentially love. Solidarity is social love: practical recognition, and therefore respect of the other. On the other hand, to be human is to hope: human beings project themselves into the future. An ethic of solidarity-in-hope corresponds to who we are. According to Alfaro, God draws near to us by means of solidarity, offering the grace that leads humanity to its fullness in hope and solidarity, a fullness for whom Christ himself is model.¹⁰¹

Mexican born María Pilar Aquino also sees love as the basis of solidarity,

⁹⁷ Tony Mifsud, “La cultura de la solidaridad como proyecto ético,” *Nuevo Mundo: Revista de Teología Latinoamericana* 54 (1997) 61–71, at 62.

⁹⁸ Ivone Gebara says that her ecofeminist perspective combines social feminism with holistic ecology. “Through ecofeminism, I have begun to see more clearly how much our bodies—my body, and the bodies of my neighbors—are affected, not just by unemployment and economic hardship, but also by the harmful effects the system of industrial exploitation imposes on them” (*Longing for Running Water: Ecofeminism and Liberation* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999] vi).

⁹⁹ *Ibid.* 158–59.

¹⁰⁰ See Yáñez, *Esperanza y solidaridad*, n. 10 above.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.* See “Conclusions,” chapter 9, 373–93; and Yáñez’s recent article extending the reflections of his book, “Jalones para fundamentar una ética de la solidaridad esperante,” *Stromata* 56 (2000) 1–26.

which for Latin American indigenous people is affective, heartfelt, and concerned with “the profound ancestral community spirit of our peoples.”¹⁰² Showing affection is not a weakness. On the contrary, as a central value of Latin American people, this expression of love gives spiritual strength to unite women and a whole people.

Others emphasize that both love and justice constitute the marrow of solidarity. “To grow in solidarity,” says Brazilian theologian Maria Clara Bingemer, “is to live an ethic which recognizes the personal dignity of others as equal to oneself.” For Bingemer, justice respects others as equals, while love moves one to commitment in friendship.¹⁰³ Mifsud also identifies love and justice as the essential elements of solidarity, love operating as its subjective component and justice as its objective component. Love fosters solidarity by recognizing the other, not simply as a subject of rights and duties, but also by entering “into relations with the other who ceases to be merely the other and recovers his/her proper name.” Love relates to justice by motivating persons to commit themselves to the cause of justice.¹⁰⁴ Justice establishes right relations between persons and groups, humanizes structures, and thus expresses love concretely by establishing basic conditions for friendship and community. Justice promotes solidarity by recognizing the fundamental equality of all persons while avoiding treating everyone the same; and it recognizes the particularity of groups while steering clear of discrimination. Mifsud finds John Paul II’s description of solidarity to be apt because it synthetically unites love and justice. Solidarity for the pope is “a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say, to the good of all and of each individual, because we are really responsible for all.”¹⁰⁵ Working for the common good is central to social justice; the firm determination to do so is love.

Solidarity relates to rights as has been shown by Nilo Agostini’s study of the Catholic Church’s defense of human rights in Brazil, and by Tony Mifsud’s construction of an ethics of human rights that highlights the right to the truth. Agostini traces the history of the Church’s awakening to human rights from the Magna Carta to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations.¹⁰⁶ He shows how declarations of rights

¹⁰² María Pilar Aquino, *Our Cry for Life: Feminist Theology from Latin America*, trans. Dinah Livingstone (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1993) 105, 220 n. 85.

¹⁰³ Maria Clara Luchetti Bingemer, “Solidarities or Conflict: Possibilities of Dialogue between Catholic Social Thought and Liberation Theology,” *SEDOS Bulletin* 23 (November 1991) 309–13, at 310.

¹⁰⁴ Mifsud, “La cultura” 351.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* 63. See John Paul II, *Sollicitudo rei socialis* no. 38.

¹⁰⁶ Nilo Agostini, “Direitos humanos: o despertar da Igreja no Brasil: Aos 50 anos da Declaração Universal da ONU,” *Revista Eclesiástica Brasileira* 58 (1998) 871–95.

in the 18th to the 19th centuries helped the Church recognize the dignity of the individual, and how these same rights gave legitimacy to bourgeois hegemony. He then presents how the Church's recent thought on human rights and corresponding pastoral practice unfolded in two stages. In the first stage, the Church appealed to individual rights in defense of mostly middle-class victims of political persecution during Brazil's military dictatorship. Virtually the sole voice speaking out during the brutal years of repression (1964–75), the Church accompanied families of victims who were tortured, who "disappeared," and were killed. In the second stage beginning in 1975, the Church defended the trampled rights of the poor majority, becoming an advocate first for the people's social rights, then for their economic rights. Social rights include access to education and information, health services, environment rights, and respect for one's culture; economic rights involve claims to the basic necessities for survival.

When democratization became possible in 1985, the Church, together with human rights organizations, undertook a creative work called the "construction of citizenship," or "*ciudadanía*."¹⁰⁷ Because the poor had never before enjoyed full citizenship—they were at best partial and passive citizens—the Church realized that proclaiming equality for these down-trodden was hardly enough. Under the capitalistic system, economic inequality for the majority meant exclusion. In the Brazilian system of privileges, clients, and protectorates, claims might be awarded to "non-citizens" as concessions, but never as rights. The Church sought to reverse this marginal status by promoting active citizenship for the poor majority.¹⁰⁸ These efforts of solidarity by the Church in Brazil dovetail with the phenomena related to the burgeoning of civil society throughout Latin America. The construction of citizenship for the excluded concretely illustrates what David Hollenbach has emphasized, namely, that social justice demands that all persons be active participants in society's sociopolitical and economic activity and that full participation must be recognized as a fundamental right.¹⁰⁹

Speaking about reconciliation in the context of past repression, Mifsud says that truth is a right as well as a duty. He means that persons have the right to tell the truth about repression in which they, their family or friends were victims. Telling the truth in such instances involves reconstructing and speaking about these horrific events, which if left unspoken would continue to disturb the victims' psyche. Remembering the "forgotten" persecution and giving public testimony about it is not only a moral obligation, Mifsud maintains, but a fundamental right that enables persons to recover their

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. 895.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. 879, 883.

¹⁰⁹ David Hollenbach, *Justice, Peace, and Human Rights: American Catholic Social Ethics in a Pluralistic World* (New York: Crossroad, 1990) 66.

security, freedom, and dignity. While it is understandable that victims would want to bury gruesome memories, their doing so intentionally constitutes a lie because it distorts the past and allows the memory to continue to paralyze themselves and others. Such troubling memories inevitably surface, dwell in one's consciousness as an eternal present, and block the future horizon. Providing the opportunity to tell one's story affords one the opportunity to reveal one's human face in the presence of the adversary, helps the country to break the vicious circle of violence, and allows a people to grow in trust and solidarity.¹¹⁰

PROBLEMS AND POTENTIAL OF SOLIDARITY

Creating an ethics of solidarity, however, is not without its problems. Here are three with which theologians are wrestling: (1) How is a preferential option for the poor compatible with the common good and the ultimate goal of universal solidarity? (2) Does solidarity with the poor encompass the concerns of women and people of color? (3) Does an ethics of solidarity deal adequately with conflict and violence? In the following sections we reflect on each of these three issues.

From Particularity to Universality

Theologians who advocate an option for the poor usually respond to the first problem by stating emphatically that solidarity with the poor intends as its final goal universal brotherhood and sisterhood in a new society. Gustavo Gutiérrez explains that preference for the poor "simply points out who ought to be the first—not the only—objects of our solidarity."¹¹¹ Others emphasize that solidarity strives to increase the well-being and happiness of all people by first giving priority to those groups whose needs are greatest.¹¹² But, is an ethics preferentially committed to victims of oppression capable of moving beyond its initial commitment to include the victimizers within the community of discourse?

Enrique Dussel's ethics of liberation addresses this problem. First of all, Dussel envisions solidarity occurring among victims by means of dialogue that generates strategies of resistance. Secondly, these communities should

¹¹⁰ Mifsud, "Ética de los derechos humanos: una perspectiva cristiana," *Medellín* 26 (2000) 321–54, at 345–47.

¹¹¹ Gutiérrez, "Option for the Poor" 239.

¹¹² Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*, rev. ed., trans. and ed. Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1988; original ed. 1973) 81, 83, 113; and Tony Mifsud, "La cultura de la solidaridad como proyecto ético," *Nuevo Mundo: Revista de Teología Latinoamericana* 54 (1997) 61–71, at 63.

be open to allies who are not themselves victims. However, Dussel does not believe that universal solidarity can develop within a capitalist society, which inevitably divides the haves and the have-nots, alienates workers, and destroys human life. While this perspective might not rule out dialogue between capitalists and alienated workers and other victims of the system, it does mean that social transformation will involve conflict. Meanwhile, communities of victims must develop strategies of resistance and transformation that ultimately aim to deconstruct an unjust social order and to construct a life “that is shared in solidarity with humanity and having humanity as an ultimate reference point.”¹¹³ However, Dussel does not believe paradise can be achieved on earth. No matter how just, every real human society will produce victims.¹¹⁴

Given Dussel’s emphasis on solidarity among victims, what promise does his ethics hold for moving toward the ultimate goal of solidarity with all humanity? We see three qualities in his ethics that have potential for moving the community toward a more inclusive or expansive solidarity: First, his sensitivity to the particularities of cultures and a healthy suspicion of theories that claim to be universal in scope, but which in fact are ethnocentric, especially Eurocentric. His envisioning a global community that links center to periphery, woman to man, ethnic group to ethnic group, North to South, and the human species to the earth is an attractive ideal.¹¹⁵ Second, we agree with James Marsh’s assessment that Dussel’s ethics is “worked out in the form of a very comprehensive, thoroughgoing, far-reaching dialogue with the history of philosophy, ethics, and critical theory.”¹¹⁶ Third, his formal principle of validity that allows for self-criticism and invites external critique would appear to encourage openness and a continual expansion of the community’s membership. Yet, for all Dussel’s well-constructed principles that guide dialogue among the communities of victims and between the North and the South, thorny issues remain. For one thing, can meaningful discourse take place between powerful capitalists and marginalized victims? For another, as the community of victims grows in power, and as it gradually moves from the social periphery to the center, will it continue to build consensus? Or will its new social status make it as competitive and dogmatic as its victimizers? Will power within another system, namely, democratic socialism, be shared

¹¹³ Enrique Dussel, “Globalization and the Victims of Exclusion: From a Liberation Ethics Perspective,” *Modern Schoolman* 75 (January 1998) 119–55, at 148.

¹¹⁴ Dussel, *Ética de la liberación* 564–66.

¹¹⁵ Enrique Dussel, *The Invention of the Americas: Eclipse of “the Other” and the Myth of Modernity* (New York: Continuum, 1995) 17.

¹¹⁶ Marsh, “Principles in Dussel’s Ethics” in *Thinking from the Underside* 51.

equitably? Finally, how would liberation ethics deal with conflicts of interest on a global scale and in a peaceful way.¹¹⁷

Women and Solidarity

We turn to the second problem that asks whether solidarity with the economically poor and politically powerless is open to solidarity with women and people of color. In the first stages of its development, liberation theology tended to regard the poor as a homogeneous group. In the late 1970s, feminist theologians voiced dissatisfaction with a narrowly focused agenda that ignored women's issues and racial oppression.¹¹⁸ Feminist and black theologians showed that poverty and oppression affect people in different ways, and so solidarity with these poor calls for different analysis and praxis.¹¹⁹

Feminist liberation theologians generally ground their ethics in a spirituality that takes into account their own experience as well as the experience of poor women and people of color. They analyze structural injustices perpetrated against women within Latin American society. Elsa Tamez of Costa Rica collaborates with other theologians especially from economically underdeveloped countries in Africa and Asia in examining critically certain customs, attitudes, men-women relationships, world views and practices that do violence to women and seek to impose on them a false identity. In one study, she investigates three levels of culture: elements within one's native culture that do violence to women; positive cultural values that shape identity and therefore must be protected; and the imposition of foreign patriarchal elements on one's own culture. Using myths presented by Milagros Palma, Tamez shows how machismo and the violence it engenders are imposed upon women in sexual activity, traditional songs, and dance. She proposes several strategies for struggling against cultural violence, including calling all women to "make an international

¹¹⁷ Karl-Otto Apel, "Can 'Liberation Ethics' Be Assimilated under 'Discourse Ethics'?" in *Thinking from the Underside* 69–70.

¹¹⁸ Ana María Tepedino, "La mujer y la teología en América Latina: antecedentes históricos," in *Entre la indignación y la esperanza: teología feminista latinoamericana*, ed. Ana María Tepedino and María Pilar Aquino (Caracas: Indo-American Press Service, 1998) 7–40, at 16–19.

¹¹⁹ Elsa Tamez, "Cultural Violence Against Women in Latin America," in *Women Resisting Violence: Spirituality for Life*, ed. Mary John Mananzan, Mercy Amba Oduyoye et al. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1996) 11–12; and James H. Cone, "Black Theology and the Imperative and Dilemma of Solidarity," in *Struggles for Solidarity: Liberation Theologies in Tension*, ed. Lorine M. Getz and Ruy O. Costa (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992) 37–48.

alliance of women from all cultures and races to do battle against patriarchal Western culture.”¹²⁰

María Pilar Aquino points out that feminist theologians from countries in Asia and Africa identify remarkably similar problems related to economic discrimination as well as physical violence against women. She regards her task and that of her sisters worldwide to help eliminate these practices, and even more importantly to change the structures and ethos that contribute to the violence.¹²¹ She identifies the primary villain as the capitalist who reinforces male-dominated social relations and neocolonialist policies all of which do damage to women and planetary life. Her investigation criticizes the anthropological, ethical, and theological presuppositions of neoliberal capitalism. In the ethical dimension, she identifies individual freedom to satisfy all wants, such as profits, handsome appearance, pleasure, and prestige, as the primary principle of the neoliberal model. In constructing her ethics of solidarity, Aquino borrows from Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza the general principle that we ought to do “what is best for oppressed women”; from Leonardo Boff she borrows the principle that the good is whatever “conserves and promotes all creatures, especially living creatures, and among living beings, the weakest.”¹²² Like Boff and Dussel, she tries to strike a balance between the particular and the universal, between the option for oppressed women and the “interconnectedness of all women’s bodies as bearers of God’s grace, power, and mystery,” and between creating an agenda of justice for women and the fundamental rights of all persons.¹²³

Ivone Gebara defines feminist spirituality as “ethical and metaphysical values that are capable of guiding and giving meaning to people’s lives.”¹²⁴ Gebara’s ethics draws upon values from the gospel, her own experience, and that of diverse groups of poor Brazilian women. She shares personal stories, for example, how her strong desire to live the gospel imperative to love one’s neighbor as oneself had overshadowed loving herself. As she came to love herself, she then understood what it meant to resist, to dare to think, and to take the side of women called public sinners. She discovered that the women she worked with held diverse values and relied upon distinctive powers rooted in Christian and Afro-Brazilian religions or no religious tradition at all. Given this diversity, Gebara thinks that for the present time life calls her and the people to suspend the attempt to create

¹²⁰ Tamez, “Cultural Violence” 18.

¹²¹ María Pilar Aquino, “Economic Violence in Latin American Perspective,” in *Women Resisting Violence* 101.

¹²² *Ibid.* 104–5.

¹²³ *Ibid.* 107.

¹²⁴ Ivone Gebara, “Feminist Spirituality: Risk and Resistance,” in *In the Power of Wisdom: Feminist Spiritualities of Struggle*, ed. María Pilar Aquino and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Concilium* 2000/5 (London: SCM, 2000) 33–42, at 33.

new spiritualities while protesting against the massive destructiveness that threatens all hope of life, and to wait in solidarity “for the new day that will come.”¹²⁵

The writings of feminist theologians Bingemer, Tamez, Aquino, Gebara, and others have enriched Latin American moral theology in a number of ways. Moral theology now attends to specific concerns and rights of poor women and people of color. Moreover, Latin American feminist theologians share their research on a regular basis with feminist theologians in other continents. Finally, feminist theologians draw upon indigenous myths of Latin Americans as well as stories from their own personal experience.

Conflict and Violence

Solidarity with the poor inevitably leads to opposition and conflict. The third problem asks whether an ethics of solidarity adequately addresses conflict and violence. Maria Clara Bingemer asserts that it should, and within the circle of liberation theology, the ethics of solidarity does address the conflict and violence that unjust practices cause. She implies that liberation theology differs in this respect from Catholic social teaching which tends to bypass the conflict by addressing moral problems on the level of general ethical principles and by avoiding a structural analysis that would expose the roots of exploitation. Such disclosure would likely bring the Church into conflict with the powerful. Committing oneself to an ethics of solidarity with the poor inevitably involves people in conflict and this will often require the moralist to act courageously. “The seeds of solidarity,” Bingemer has written, “are already present within conflict and within the process of overcoming it.”¹²⁶ Clodovis and Leonardo Boff, like Bingemer, also think that Catholic social teaching fails to go far enough. They have argued that when the bishops fail to do a structural and systemic analysis, they confine their ethics to an ineffective moralism and an individualistic range of choices.¹²⁷

Some theologians have critically examined people’s assumptions about God in relation to violence and exploitation. José María Vigil has provided a historical analysis of “undeclared wars” waged against the “wretched of the earth” within societies officially at peace. He contrasts the “God of War” with the “God of Peace.” The God of War, a human construct, is the God of self-interests associated with privilege, choice, power, and well-being, a God who shows indifference to the poor and cooperates with the

¹²⁵ Ibid. 42.

¹²⁶ Bingemer, “Solidarity or Conflict” 310 (see n. 103 above).

¹²⁷ Clodovis Boff and Leonardo Boff, “A Igreja Perante a Economia nos EUA: Um Olhar a Partir da Perferia,” *Revista Eclesiástica Brasileira* 47 (June 1987) 367.

establishment. The God of Peace is the God of revelation who becomes indignant at the exploitation of the vulnerable and who rouses worshipers to become indignant and to denounce the injustice.¹²⁸ Historically, Christians in Latin America frequently followed the God of War. They have remained passive in the face of injustice from the Conquest to the present day. In recent times church hierarchies kept silent when faced with dictatorships and repression in countries such as Guatemala, Argentina, and Chile. Vigil challenges his own Church and other world religions to question the presence of the God of War in their own traditions and to be converted to the universal God of Peace with justice.

María Pilar Aquino agrees with Vigil that the root cause of war, declared or not, is exploitation of the poor, and argues that this exploitation is brought about through “kyriarchal” structures.¹²⁹ She contends that Catholic teaching on military violence has been ineffective in opposing formally declared wars; she thinks it even less capable of dealing with non-formal wars “especially the violence against women that is a scourge on the face of the earth.”¹³⁰ Both Vigil and Aquino recognize with the Boffs and Bingemer that an ethic of solidarity must deal with the conflict that surfaces as a result of structural analysis of society. For them theology and ethics must include praxis.

DEBT FORGIVENESS

A problem that perhaps has generated the most conflict in Latin America is the external debt. In 1999, some 41 highly indebted poor nations worldwide, including Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, and Mexico, collectively owed more than \$200 billion to the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, regional development banks, the commercial banks, and the governments of rich countries.¹³¹ The debt began in the 1960s when money-lending agencies made huge loans to Latin America and other economically challenged countries. Indebtedness became a crisis in the 1970s

¹²⁸ José María Vigil, “The God of War and the God of Peace with Justice,” in *The Return of the Just War*, ed. María Pilar Aquino and Dietmar Mieth, *Concilium* 2001/2 (London: SCM, 2001) 99–100.

¹²⁹ María Pilar Aquino, “Justice Upholds Peace: A Feminist Approach,” in *The Return of the Just War* 103. “Kyriarchal,” a concept coined by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, is “a complex social pyramid of graduate dominations and subordinations” in which an “elite of propertied men have power and control over those subordinated to and dependent on them.”

¹³⁰ María Pilar Aquino, “Justice Upholds Peace: A Feminist Approach,” in *The Return of the Just War* 105–6.

¹³¹ Administrative Board of the United States Catholic Conference, “A Jubilee Call for Debt Forgiveness” (Washington: United States Catholic Conference, 1999) 5.

when interest rates soared. Disinterested observers agree that, economically speaking, the debt is unpayable. The issue that theologians address is not whether the debt can be paid but rather whether it should be paid. Should debtor nations continue to service a debt (paying the interest and amortization) on the loan?

As the new millennium and the Jubilee Year 2000 were approaching, Latin American theologians Gregorio Iriarte of Bolivia and Franz Hinklelammert of Costa Rica argued that the debt should be forgiven because servicing the debt was squeezing the lifeblood out of the largely destitute economies. Two ethical discussions merit special attention: Iriarte's arguments about the debt and Hinklelammert's reflections on the debt in the light of the Jubilee Year.

Iriarte maintains that the external debt is unjust and therefore should be canceled for the following reasons: (1) the conditions in which the original loan was contracted were unfair; (2) servicing the debt would have dire consequences for the poor; and (3) the debtor nations have already sufficiently compensated the lenders.¹³² Regarding the conditions of the original contract, Iriarte shows that to a great extent the debt was contracted by illegitimate Latin American governments in the 1960s and 1970s. Corrupt dictators in Argentina, Brasil, Paraguay, Chile, and Bolivia, who had forcefully taken over the government, borrowed large sums of U.S. dollars but invested for themselves large portions in foreign banks and used a relatively small portion for the benefit of their countries.¹³³ The people from the debtor nations now required to service the debt had not elected the dictators as their representatives; they had no voice in drawing up or approving the contract; they received little or no benefit from the loans—on the contrary, they became more impoverished. Both the governors of the lending countries as well as the international banking creditors knew the political and economic situation of the borrowing nations. The creditors, who had a huge surplus of petrodollars, also knew the potential for making great profits by making the loans. Iriarte says that economist John Kenneth Galbraith neatly summarized the debt problem: "The external debt is a real festival of foolishness: the foolish bankers who made senseless loans to governors, who foolishly became indebted; all this to arrive finally at the

¹³² Gregorio Iriarte, "La deuda externa y el Jubileo 2000," *Yachay* 16, no. 29 (1999) 53–65, at 54.

¹³³ Gregorio Iriarte, *La deuda externa es inmoral* (Cochabamba, Bolivia: Editorial Verbo Divino, CEPROMI, 1998) 95–97. Cited from Guido M. Miglietta, "Estrategias para la remisión de la deuda internacional: una evaluación ética al acercarse el año santo," *Revista Teológica Limense* 33 (1999) 367–84, at 380–81. Iriarte first argues that the intolerable burden of the debt that weighs upon economically underdeveloped countries should not only be the responsibility of the governments of these nations, but also that of the creditors.

greatest transfer of income in history from poor countries to rich countries.”¹³⁴ It is wrong, concludes Iriarte, that people should suffer for financial burdens imposed on them by their corrupt leaders and foolish moneylenders.

Secondly, Iriarte maintains that servicing the debt would bring about grave evils to the debtor nations and most especially to the poor. The structural adjustment policies, imposed by the International Monetary Fund as conditions for receiving subsequent loans, require that the country modernize its economy by making production efficient and by making drastic cuts in government spending which would involve cutting back on education, health care, and social services. This translates as large layoffs and a rise in unemployment, greater hunger, shortage of supplies, and higher mortality rates. Iriarte rightly argues that a contract of this sort does not morally obligate the borrower since its fulfillment would cause a disproportionate amount of grave damage to the nation.

Thirdly, Iriarte argues that debtor nations, by servicing the debt over many years, have already sufficiently compensated the lending governments and banks. Brazil, for example, paid approximately \$113 billion in interest alone between 1979 and 1989.¹³⁵ Iriarte says a large percentage of the funds borrowed have returned to the international commercial banks mostly through capital flight. If one totals up the money that Latin America has returned to the creditors through capital flight, servicing the debt, and profits that industrial countries made by uneven commerce, one can conclude that the region is not a debtor but a creditor.

Franz Hinklelammert makes a case for forgiveness or cancellation of the debt based on an analogy with the Jubilee Year from the biblical tradition. He provides background on the Jubilee Year, highlights its essential insights, and finally relates these insights to the external debt today. He notes that the argument in favor of the Jubilee Year is not restricted to making persons moral by forgiving the other's debt, but more importantly it brings about a society of free human beings. This is not possible, Hinklelammert argues, unless the process of indebtedness is interrupted. The loss of liberty happens in the logic of the market. Within the context of the Jubilee, God is neither the God of the creditors, nor the simple representative of the interests of the debtors. “He is the God of the conditions of life for all, and for this reason, he is the God of the interruption of the processes of in-

¹³⁴ Iriarte, “La deuda externa y el Jubileo 2000” 59.

¹³⁵ Lourdes Benería, “The Foreign Debt Crisis and the Social Costs of Adjustment in Latin America,” in *Emergences: Women's Struggles for Livelihood in Latin America*, ed. John Friedmann et al. (Los Angeles: UCLA Latin American Center Publications, 1996) 11–27, at 14.

debtedness.”¹³⁶ Nonetheless, to the extent that creditors produce poverty, the judgment on them is “destroyer.” As Isaiah says, “The spoil of the poor is in your houses” (3:14). They are called thieves, not because they are wealthy or because they are creditors, but because their demand for repayment causes dispossession, loss of freedom, and poverty. Hinklelammert perceptively identifies the value of freedom as key in the Torah and in the Jubilee Year. In ancient Israel those who had fallen into unpayable debt had to sell all their possessions and eventually had to sell themselves and their families into slavery.

In biblical times, the Jubilee Year was proclaimed every 50 years. Debts were canceled and servants were set free. In the first instance, cancellation of debts meant a recovery of freedom. But it also required a recovery of conditions for earning a livelihood, including a redistribution of land for this agricultural people lest in the absence of productive resources they again become indebted and enslaved.

Returning to the debt crisis today, Hinklelammert calls for reforming the model of financial and commercial relations, including a change in the structural adjustment conditions.¹³⁷ He points out the reasonableness of canceling the debt following the practice of the Jubilee Year. Given the fact that the external debt is unpayable and that insistence upon servicing the debt sinks debtor nations deeper in debt, Hinklelammert says that canceling the entire debt makes eminently good sense. While realists scoff at this proposal, economist Jeffrey Sachs shows that the lending agencies demonstrate a lack of realism by delaying real solutions to this chronic problem. “Instead of recognizing reality, they lend the poorest countries new money to repay the old debts, claiming that the loans are still sound.”¹³⁸ But Hinklelammert, knowing the mind-set of creditors, speaks about the Jubilee Year in realistic terms. It is not clear, he says, that there is always a solution for the debt problem. “If the power of the creditors is sufficiently strong to be imposed and if they are not disposed to accept their responsibility for the consequences of their action, there is no solution.”¹³⁹ Yet he does think that the insights provided by the Jubilee Year is a realistic path to take.

BIOETHICS

Recent contributions to bioethics also demonstrate the fruitfulness of Latin American theological method. Bioethics usually refers to medical

¹³⁶ Franz J. Hinklelammert, “¿Hay una salida al problema de la deuda externa?” *Pasos* (San José, Costa Rica) 82 (1999) 8–19, at 18.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ Jeffrey D. Sachs, “A Millennial Gift to Developing Nations,” *New York Times*, June 11, 1999, op. ed.

¹³⁹ Hinklelammert, “¿Hay una salida?” 18.

ethics, genetic engineering, assisted reproduction, and so on, but not to unemployment and social systems. Jorge Domínguez of Mexico and Márcio Fabri dos Anjos of Brazil are not the first to argue that bioethics must take into account stark social inequalities, but their Latin American approach is especially suggestive.

Anjos asks: What kind of methodology could make bioethics truly an ethics of life? It is not enough to recognize sub-disciplines such as medical bioethics or environmental bioethics. When an entire society such as Brazil is gravely ill, in order to avoid a fragmented approach, it is necessary to appreciate how the many factors contributing to the situation are interconnected. That means taking into account at least three dimensions of reality: the microsocioal dimension, including the microrelations of family, doctor, and patient, as well as relations to the immediate environment (pollution); middle-level relations such as those between groups (e.g., research groups), institutional (hospital) relations, relations of groups to their environment; and macrosocioal relations, including public policy and the way political and economic systems affect health and life.¹⁴⁰

In an analogous way, Domínguez distinguishes three levels of diagnosis and treatment of illness. The individualistic approach focuses on pathogens as the single cause of illness of individuals. Transcending this perspective, traditional epidemiology offers an empirical-phenomenological account of social and environmental causes of illness, but in a disconnected way that fails to get at root social causes. Only a third level of analysis of society as an interconnected historical totality can uncover the deepest causes of sickness and health. These can be traced to “the form in which [society] is organized to produce and reproduce itself.”¹⁴¹

Both Anjos and Domínguez also affirm the methodological need to adopt the standpoint of the poor. In doing bioethics, one cannot take the richest ten percent of the population as the primary referent rather than the majority who suffer from hunger, unemployment, and lack of health services.¹⁴²

Both moralists are convinced that theology helps shape the mystique of bioethics in positive ways. Liberation theology alerts ethicists to the quasi-religious pretensions and hidden interests underlying theory and practices, including medical theory and practice. Such notions as the God of life and

¹⁴⁰ For this paragraph, see Márcio Fabri dos Anjos, “Bioética nas desigualdades sociais” in *A bioética no século XXI*, 49–65, especially 49–54 (see n. 7 above). See also his, “Poder, ética y los pobres en la investigación sobre genética humana,” *Concilium* [Spanish edition] 275 (1998) 273–85.

¹⁴¹ Jorge Domínguez R., “Moral y vida humana,” *Voces* 10 (1997) 77–87, at 85.

¹⁴² Anjos, “Bioética nas desigualdades sociais” 54–55; Domínguez, “Moral y vida” 86.

humans as co-creators, the idea that life is both a great gift and a process of liberation, the moral ambiguity of human enterprises and technologies, the values of gratuitousness and preferential concern for the weak; the critical use of social science—all these ideas, rooted in Christian theology, nourish bioethics.¹⁴³ On the other hand, empirical research challenges theological formulations such as “the moment of the infusion of the soul,” a sacralized notion of “nature,” and so on.¹⁴⁴

According to Anjos, a liberation perspective inspires a rereading of the classical bioethical principles of autonomy, beneficence and non-maleficence, and justice.¹⁴⁵ It is necessary to ask about the autonomy not only of individuals but also of groups and communities. Exclusion from education and technology can rob individuals and communities of the ability to give informed consent. Vulnerability critically affects autonomy. Autonomy might be impossible for people with HIV/AIDS, for indigenous communities, or for others who are politically and economically marginalized. The conditions for autonomy and free, enlightened consent often have to be constructed or fortified before these criteria can be applied.

Similarly, in a liberation perspective, one must ask about the beneficence/non-maleficence of public policies affecting health. Finally, the principle of justice must be applied by means of love and solidarity: A vision of brotherhood and sisterhood transcends mere distributive justice and gives priority to those who are worse off. In short, bioethics in a liberation perspective addresses institutional threats to life and inspires transformative social action.

Environmental ethics is another fruitful sector of Latin American moral theology, especially the recent writings of Leonardo Boff, Ivone Gebara, and José Roque Junges, all of Brazil. But the vastness of that topic precludes our treating the topic adequately here.

CONCLUSION

In this survey we have reviewed writings in which Latin American moral theology differs from moral theology elsewhere and have traced its recent evolution. Moral theology continues to flourish in Latin America. Even

¹⁴³ See Anjos, “Bioética nas desigualdades sociais” 54–58; see also his, “Bioética e teologia: Janelas e interpelações,” *Perspectiva Teológica* 33 (2001) 13–31, esp. 13–19.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 18, 21; see Domínguez, “Moral y vida humana” 80, 85. A tentative, non-authoritarian discourse in the search for truth and ethical criteria is most appropriate for the theological bioethics today (*ibid.* 80; Anjos “Bioética e teologia” 28–30).

¹⁴⁵ See Anjos, “Bioética nas desigualdades sociais” 59–63.

though they do not insist on the liberation theology label, theologians do moral theology from a liberation perspective and continue to influence theologians in other regions of the world. The typical method of adopting the perspective of the poor and integrating structural analysis, ethical argument, and praxis continues to flourish, bearing rich fruit in areas such as bioethics, ecology, and feminism.

We have noted a rich diversity in the publications reviewed, partly due to the contributions of feminist theologians and to global networking of Latin Americans with philosophers and theologians from Africa, Asia, Western Europe, and North America. Enrique Dussel carries on debates with modernist and postmodernist thinkers about communities of discourse and universal moral claims; Elsa Tamez and Maria Pilar Aquino share patterns of oppression toward women with theologians such as Mercy Amba Oduyoye (Africa), Letty Russell (U.S.) and others. In their collaboration, women have discovered patterns of alienation and solidarity that cross cultural boundaries.

Because poverty and structural inequality is Latin America's most crucial social problem, theologians focus their research on the political economy, continue to be highly critical of capitalism, yet see no model on the horizon that might replace it. While all theologians recognize, in varying degrees, certain benefits of the market, they also call for regulation to insure a society in which everyone has a place. Many call for subjecting economic policy and practice to democratic accountability. This would require a strong government, which presently exists in few countries. Partly because of this, civil society has become a focus of hope and study, including study by moral theologians, who have become especially attentive to the reality of culture. Cultural change has highlighted the need for a theology of personal freedom.

Solidarity serves as a root concept that organizes and gives a social dimension to rights and concepts of love and justice, in a way that challenges liberals' preoccupation with individual claims. Solidarity stresses community values, including the love and affection that draw people together in friendship. An exclusive focus on proprietary rights and justice in societies characterized by gratuitous give-and-take and by a communitarian ethos would make for a dreary existence and ineffectual ethics.

Dussel's recent work in ethics strikes us as an important advance. It builds on liberation theology's bedrock principle of an option for the poor and develops material and formal principles that go far toward establishing a solid foundation for a liberation ethic. Dussel's ethic calls for dialogue among communities of victims without closing off wider alliances. It balances respect for local particularity while recognizing the universal imperative to promote life-with-dignity. While Dussel continues to reject an

economy based on profits and wages, he recognizes that all real-life social systems will produce victims. In that case, there will always be need for social transformation.

Critics used to fault liberation theology for its weak ethics. In our review of Latin American moral theology over the past six years we have found that theologians have steadily and creatively developed their ethical framework. They continue to integrate Scripture into their moral arguments, make good use of Catholic social teaching, and increasingly appeal to local cultural values. Other strong features include the insistence on adopting the perspective of the poor, the use of structural analysis, and the integration of theory and praxis. We believe that this rich tradition of moral theology will continue to be enriched by feminist and ecological theology.