3

Responding to Revolution

Persecution and propaganda were significant features of the wars waged against both the Anabaptists and the Liberationists. The responses within these two radical faith movements to the onslaughts they experienced varied considerably. Some within the movements called for reform and others for revolution. Some responded with an other-worldly fatalism; others developed negotiation and survival skills that served them well, at least for a time; a few responded to violence with violence, preferring both to live and die by the sword. Most had a dream of a fairer world in the here and now or the hereafter (and often in both) where the enemy—the Pope, the Emperor, an antagonistic Bishop or a dictator—would not trouble them any longer. In this chapter, some of the shared responses that characterised the development of both movements in revolutionary times will be explored. As this exploration is undertaken, the focus will, again, be on the interaction between radical faith communities and their religious, social, and political contexts. In looking at Latin America, Brazil and Colombia will be considered. In sixteenth century Europe, the examples used will be drawn from Jagiellonian Poland-Lithuania (then the largest State in Europe) and from German Anabaptism, including the nightmarish scenario of Munster in the early 1530s.

RE-INVENTING THE LATIN AMERICAN CHURCH

Latin America in the decades after the Second World War was, like sixteenth-century Europe under Charles V, a once clearly Catholic continent undergoing splits and schisms as potent Protestant rivals arrived on the scene. Jenkins traces the phenomenal growth of Protestantism—including Pentecostalism—in Latin America by the turn of the new millennium:

> In 1940, barely a million Protestants were recorded in the whole of Latin America. Since 1960, though, Protestant numbers in the region have been growing at an average annual rate of 6 percent, so that today Protestants make up around one-tenth of the whole population, some 50 million people. In terms of their share of the population, Protestants or *evangelicos* are strongest in Guatemala and Chile, in each case representing around one-quarter of the whole. Brazil alone has perhaps 20 to 25 million *crentes* or believers-that is, Protestants. . . These proportions are so important because Protestants also tend to be more religiously committed, more likely to be active churchgoers, than most of their nominally Catholic neighbors. Just how much stronger the new churches can become remains a matter of alarm for the Catholic hierarchies of the region.[1]

Anthony Gill describes one effect of this on the Catholic psyche: ". . .most bishops no longer take for granted the Catholicness of their flock. While this has provoked some episcopacies to seek limits on the religious freedom of evangelical churches, increased competition has had the beneficial impact of prodding the Catholic clergy into paying closer attention to the spiritual needs and desires of the people under their care."[2] Catholic renewal movements such as the base communities, as has already been seen, were one response to such challenges. Protestantism was, however, only one of the problems Catholicism in Latin America was facing. New accommodations with the State were also needed.

If revolution has a long history in Latin America, political dictatorship has a longer one still. Latin American politics has long been characterized by the cult of the *caudillos*—the strong male leader. These were often soldiers (or ex-soldiers) who took power by force.[3] By the beginning of the 1980s, practically all of Latin America below the Amazon was under

1. Jenkins, *Global Christianity*, 61.

2. Gill, "The Struggle to Be Soul Provider," 36.

3. Skidmore and Smith note the influence of this tradition in their *Modern Latin America*, 38–39.

their rule—Brazil, Paraguay, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay and Bolivia.[4] Each of these regimes had adopted "the Doctrine of National Security" first formulated by the Brazilian military strategist, General Golbery do Couto e Silva.[5] According to this doctrine, the military's role was to decree and then enforce a strong dose of social stability for a nation by freeing it from all "politics." In practice, this meant the repression of those whose politics did not fit a right wing authoritarian mindset, especially those who were Socialist or populist supporters. Opposition political parties were banned, universities "purged" and the various news media were steadily bought under State control. Much emphasis was laid on "the nation" and "the State," which was always to come first. The human rights of "the people" or "the individual" were correspondingly eroded.[6] Some within the Church hierarchy were generally uncritical of these new security measures whilst religious radicals found themselves in frequent conflict with them.

Jacques Maritain's fresh perspectives on the place of the Catholic Church in Society had played a significant role in these debates.[7] A consultant to Pope John Paul VI for the social encyclicals of the 1960s, Maritain had encouraged the Catholic Church in Latin America to abandon too close an alliance with the government of a country. He had argued that the Church should no longer be used to bolster the political status quo but, instead, should become politically neutral and leave politics to the politicians. Bishops and priests should not interfere with the art of statecraft but instead should bear witness to eternal truths. Their role was to be one of watching over Society and its people and encouraging policies for the common good by, for example, reminding those in authority of the need to embrace social justice. One side-effect of this new approach to Christendom was a less prophetic and more conciliatory approach to whichever government was in power.

The Brazilian-based Belgian liberation theologian Jose Comblin drew attention to one consequence of, as he saw it, this abdication of responsibility– the emergence of the Doctrine of National Security.[8] Some Latin American Catholics welcomed this doctrine for protecting the

4. Stephen, "South America's New Dictators."

5. Lernoux, "The Doctrine of National Security," 160.

6. Bochenski, *Theology from Three Worlds*, 10–12.

7. For an introduction to Maritain see Doering, "Jacques Maritain," 306–16. For the impact of his social theology see Bell, *End of History,* 62; and Cleary, *Crisis and Change*, 66–68.

8. For an account of the Church's struggles against this doctrine see Comblin, *National Security State*.

Church against the kind of aggressive Marxism it had experienced in, for example, parts of Mexico during the 1930s.[9] For others it had led to a new kind of complicity with governments in power and to further examples of the Church's guilty silence in the face of human suffering. Comblin, rejected the idea that Maritain's philosophy represented a kind of benign new Constantinianism[10] and argued instead that: ". . . the future depends on the struggle: either Christianity will be able to save the peoples from the powers, or it will become nothing but a mere cultural symbol in an essentially pagan society."[11] He also drew attention to the implications of such a struggle: "The cost of the prophetic word is pressure, persecution, threat and finally death. In the present situation the church is realizing that the word of God may be dangerous to its own security. If Christians speak, the power of the State reacts against them, and may silence them forcibly. If they choose to remain silent, they choose survival, but they feel that they may be betraying their own mission."[12] Comblin was one of several liberation theologians offering an alternative Christendom perspective to both Maritain and the Doctrine of National Security; one rooted both in the social justice tradition of Vatican II and in the preferential option for the poor. This proved to be the catalyst for a deeply divisive debate within Latin American Catholicism.

Another internal tension within Latin American Catholicism was how to respond to a chronic shortage of clergy. Leonardo Boff drew attention to this in his reflections on the new kind of Church now needed in Latin America.[13] The base communities, he argued, had sprung into being for a number of reasons but especially the scarcity of ordained priests to cater for the spiritual needs of Latin America's many Catholics.[14] Lay leadership, male or female, at the eucharist was a legitimate response, or so Boff, to the failures of the Catholic hierarchy to provide enough male priests: "Basically it is a matter of recognising the extraordinary situation that calls for an extraordinary solution."[15] For among the implications of this shortage of ordained priests, was that the eucharist could not be

9. Graham Greene's novel *The Power and the Glory* evokes something of the trauma of this period for Latin American Catholics.

10. Comblin, *National Security State,* 83.

11. Ibid., 98.

12. Ibid., 172–73.

13. Boff, *Ecclesiogenesis*.

14. Ibid., 61.

15. Ibid., 70–71.

celebrated at all in many areas of Latin America on a regular basis. For Boff this was an opportunity and not a crisis: "It is not that this absence is not felt, is not painful. It is rather that these ministers do not exist in sufficient numbers. This historical situation does not cause the Church to disappear. The Church abides in the people of God as they continue to come together, convoked by The Word and discipleship of Jesus Christ."[16] Christ is still present among Christians, Boff insisted, even where there was no priest present: "The image of body and members or of head and members represents the relationship between Christ and the Church, not that between the universal church and the local Church."[17] The time had come, Boff pleaded, to develop a new working model of the Church based on the community life of God's people within which the Risen Lord is present. This, he argued, was a superior model to the traditional "sacred" hierarchical model of Pope, bishops and priests set over against the laity or the faithful. Just as the parish system came gradually to change the definition of the Church between the twelfth-century and fourteenth-century so, Boff suggested, the *praxis* of the base communities will prove to be God at work, changing the face of his Church towards the end of the twentieth-century.[18] The base communities were God at work redefining the Church.

Boff's later (1981) book, *Church, Charism and Power,* became an ecclesiological battleground. Written to challenge what he saw as the Vatican's religious totalitarianism, Boff soon found himself accused both of ecclesiological relativism and of fragmenting the Church. Ratzinger was his main antagonist.[19] Boff had called for a new ecclesiology:

> Neither Paul nor John fell into a doctrinal fixation, alleging that such and such words were actually spoken by the word of life but rather, with a basic fidelity to the spirit of Christ and his message, they translated those words into concepts and expressions that their hearers could understand, accept, and thus be converted to faith in Jesus Christ the saviour. The same can be said about ecclesiastical institutions. Only if they are open to an ongoing perfection, reform, and adaptation will they be of service to the Spirit in the Church and in the world. Otherwise they run the risk of becoming conservative and an oppressive power contrary to the liberating development of grace and faith.[20]

16. Ibid.,13.
17. Ibid.,18.
18. Ibid.,33.
19. His reasons are explored in ch. 5 of this book.
20. Boff, *Charism*, 153.

He also asked for repentance over the way the Church treated its dissidents and critics, complaining about the lack of release mechanisms for priests who had outlived or rejected their vocation, Catholic discrimination against women, the suppression of important information, and what he termed the psychological torture of dissident priests.[21] For Boff the key question was whether the Roman Catholic Church itself was itself faithful to the gospel: "The question becomes one of understanding the Church that incarnates the gospel in the world. Gospel, properly understood, is not synonymous with the Church. But neither can it be understood apart from the Church."[22] One indication of the seriousness of the debate his writings gave to within world Catholicism was the decision of the Vatican in 1984, spearheaded by Ratzinger, to silence him for a time.[23]

There was a deeper issue at play in these internal tensions. During the 1980s, the Catholic Church under the leadership of "the Polish Pope," John Paul II, was playing a major role in seeking to liberate Central and Eastern Europe from the grip of Socialism. The Socialist sympathies of a number of Catholic theologians in Latin America created particularly difficult problems for the Vatican accordingly. Liberation in one continent meant freedom *from* Socialism; but in Latin America, Socialism was still being seen by some Catholics as providing the solutions a whole continent needed![24] The then Pope's battles with the Communist authorities in his native country of Poland have been well documented.[25] Boff, as a prominent exponent of Latin American Christian Socialism, came to symbolize this deeper debate. How *should* Latin America's Catholics respond to the revolutionary ideals so alive on their continent when their leader in Rome was fighting such a crucial battle with Socialist ideology in Europe?

21. Ibid., 37.

22. Ibid., 74.

23. An account and analysis of these events can be found in Cox, *The Silencing of Leonardo Boff*.

24. Chadwick, *Cold War*, 207.

25. Davies, "The Solidarity Decade", 483–508. See also Tim Sebastian's account of the Solidarity years in his *Nice Promises*, especially the chapter, "In the Name of the Father," 183–206.

REVOLUTION AND COUNTER-REVOLUTION IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY LATIN AMERICA

Revolution has a long and important pedigree for many in Latin America, dating back to, for example, the slave revolts of the eighteenth century and the independence movements pioneered by Simon Bolivar in the nineteenth century.[26] Emiliano Zapata and the "Land and Freedom" revolution he spearheaded against the Diaz regime in Mexico, in the early twentieth century, lingered long in the continent's memory.[27] The Cuban Revolution was a more recent source of inspiration to many Latin American radicals. The overthrow of Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista and the establishment of a new regime led by Fidel Castro and Che Guevara in 1959 was still living history as new radical Christian movements and communities emerged on the continent.[28] Dunn, an analyst of the many revolutions of the twentieth century, comments: ". . .it has been the historical effect of the Cuban revolution, whether justifiably or not, to have resuscitated the plausibility of the revolutionary role as an option for the future and not merely a glorious embellishment of a vanishing phase of history."[29] The revolution in Cuba contributed significantly to a climate of belief in revolution and radical reform, a climate that helped—alongside the impact of Catholic renewal movements and the social justice documents flowing after Vatican II—to produce what became known as liberation theology.[30] Similar revolutionary enthusiasms were in evidence two decades or so later, as the support within "the Progressive Church"[31] for the revolution in the Nicaragua of 1978–79 demonstrated.[32] Some liberation theologians believed that the poor would be the principal beneficiaries of revolutionary Socialism. Indeed liberation theology, as this opponent's comment testifies, was closely identified with such views for much of its early life:

26. For an introduction to these early revolutionary movements see Reid, *Forgotten Continent,* 53–58.

27. The classic account is Womack, *Zapata and the Mexican Revolution*. See also Reid, *Forgotten Continent,* 72–75.

28. For a brief account of these events see Dunn, *Modern Revolutions,* 199–225.

29. Ibid., 200.

30. For an insight into the revolutionary fervor of these times see Guevara and March, *The Motorcycle Diaries;* or the 2004 film of the same name directed by Walter Salles. See also here Sandison, *Che Guevarra*.

31. This term is taken from the title of a book on liberation theology by Mainwaring and Wilde, *The Progressive Church in Latin America*.

32. In ch. 7, the Nicaraguan experiment will be examined in more detail.

"Marxist ideology in the left wing of the Church is a fact of life in Latin America."[33] In the context of revolutionary and reforming aspirations, the longing among some Christians to demonstrate a preferential option for communities of the poor—God's poor—took an increasingly radical direction. Roadblocks soon appeared.

The "progressives" within the Catholic Church found themselves confronting a new political and religious alliance created to protect the status quo in the face of revolutionary challenges. Three examples will illustrate this. In 1987, the bishops of Brazil's impoverished northeast region undertook to purge the area of its long-standing basic education movement.[34] Secondly, in the same year, Bishop Luciano Mendes de Almeida publicly scolded liberation theologian Leonardo Boff for suggesting that the Communist States of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union were examples of the values of the kingdom of heaven in practice.[35] Thirdly, from 1989 the new Archbishop of Recife, Jose Cardoso Sobrinho, who replaced Camara, developed a repressive strategy designed to rebuff Christian radicals. When a group of peasants, who had arrived unannounced, demanded an immediate audience, he called upon the local military police to disperse them and when the Recife chapter of the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission protested, Cardoso promptly forbade the agency from speaking officially on behalf of the archdiocese.[36] The radicals found themselves, then, experiencing opposition from the mainstream Catholic Church hierarchy as well as from secular powers. Reid summarizes the pendulum swing of these battles over three decades or so thus:

> Across the region, the liberation theologians worked through Christian base groups and trained a generation of community leaders, most of whom are now in late middle age. They were influential in the founding of the MST[37] and of many other social movements. Revolutionary priests can still be found in Latin America. But liberation theology failed in its effort to create a mass `popular' church that would pursue socialism, as its promoters wanted. That was partly because Pope John Paul II and the Vatican hierarchy successfully isolated the liberation theologians through the preferment of conservatives (some

33. Wagner, *Latin American Theology,* 60.

34. Bruneau and Hewitt, "Catholicism and Political Action in Brazil," 56.

35. Ibid., 56–57.

36. Ibid., 57.

37. Landless Workers' Movement—Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST).

> of them ultra-reactionaries) as bishops. But it was mainly because ordinary Latin Americans were resistant to the 'popular' church.[38]

The forces of counter-reform proved to be highly effective. One outcome was a polarized Church and considerable disillusion among progressives.

REFORMATION AND COUNTER-REFORMATION IN SIXTEENTH-CENTURY POLAND

Similar tensions between reform and counter-reform had marked sixteenth-century Poland.[39] During this critical period, Poland was experiencing significant social transformation, including its own Reformation. This took place during the period of the union of Poland with Lithuania and the subsequent rule of the Jagiellonian dynasty which expanded to incorporate both Livonia and the then Ukraine. This was the age of the *Rzeczpospolita,* the united republic of Poland-Lithuania, Poland's *Zloty Wiek*—the Golden Age.[40] During the reigns of Zygmunt I (1506–48) and his son Zygmunt II (1548 –72) reform and renaissance were encouraged and international scholars and artists, especially from Italy, were welcomed to Poland. Zygmunt I's second wife, Queen Bona Sforza, encouraged many Italian artisans, architects, engineers, painters, tradesmen and scholars to come there[41]. This was the age of Nicholas Copernicus (1473–1543) the paradigm-shifting astronomer; of Jan Kochanowski (1530–84), whose Polish Psalter "did for Polish what Luther's Bible did for Germany,"[42] and of Jan Zamoyski (1542–1605), a student of Roman history and a pioneer of Poland's sixteenth-century democratic experiments. Towards the end of his reign, Zygmunt II, encouraged by Zamoyski, introduced an experiment in democracy that was to last nearly two centuries. The Kingdom was to be ruled by a single king (elected by the nobles) and a common Parliament (*Sejm*) comprising the nobility (*szlachta)*—then perhaps as much as 12% of the population[43]—with their slogan: *nic o nas bez nas.*[44]

38. Reid, *Forgotten Continent,* 228.
39. For an introduction to these events see Davies, *Heart of Europe,* 279–354.
40. Its story is told by Davies, *God's Playground,* 93–122.
41. Ibid., 113–16.
42. Davies, *Heart of Europe*, 295.
43. Davies, *God's Playground*, 121.
44. "Nothing of concern can be settled without us."

As MacCulloch notes: "Poland-Lithuania went on to exhibit one of the most richly varied and interesting of all the local religious developments in Reformation Europe."[45] A wider context of experiment and reform, innovation and initiative, created a climate within which religious radicalism could flourish and also put down roots strong enough to be able to resist the forces of Counter-Reformation for a time. The strategies which enabled this to happen were, as will soon be seen, similar in both of the movements under consideration in this book. In the process, it will also become clear that where radicals imbibed such humanist influences and ideas—as they did in Poland-Lithuania's Golden Age or through the social and political sciences in Latin America—their faith communities were much more likely to be world-affirming.

Mainstream Reformation teachings first arrived in Poland during the reign of Zygmunt I, who suppressed them for a time. A patriotic Polish Archbishop Jan Laski (1456–1531), who had studied under Erasmus in Basle in 1524–25,[46] had already lobbied effectively for increased Polish independence of Rome.[47] As Davies notes: "By the time the Reformation appeared in the 1520s the pitch had been well prepared."[48] Lutheranism found a ready acceptance among the German burghers in cities such as Gdansk, Torun, and Elblag.[49] Anabaptism arrived in its wake. On September 27 1535, Zygmunt I ordered the expulsion of ". . . the godless and criminal sect of Anabaptists"[50] from Poland. Williams suggests that five Protestant tributaries flowed into Poland at this time—Lutheranism, Italian and Erasmian humanism, the beliefs of the Czech Brethren, Calvinism, and Dutch, Silesian and Moravian Anabaptism.[51] Anabaptism sank still firmer roots in Poland in the 1540s when Dutch Anabaptists, escaping persecution elsewhere in Europe, were welcomed there, not least because they had the necessary skills, as experts on dykes and marshes, to cultivate the region now known as *Pomorze* (Pomerania) in the west.[52] Reformation ideas were also well received in Lithuania where experiences of prejudice from the Roman Catholic hierarchy fuelled revolt. Lithuanians were

45. MacCulloch, *Reformation,* 192.
46. Williams, *Lubieniecki*, 5.
47. Davies, *God's Playground*, 100–101.
48. Ibid., 101.
49. Davies, *Heart of Europe*, 295. Formerly Danzig, Thorn, and Elbing.
50. See Kot, *Socinianism,* 11.
51. Williams, *Radical Reformation,* 617–9.
52. Ibid., 612–13.

largely excluded from important or wealthy offices in the Church in favor of Polish speakers among the Polonized Lithuanian nobility and so had ". . .an incentive to favour the Reformation if they did not want to choose the cultural option of identifying with the Polish elite."[53] National resentments, as in Luther's Germany, also served the cause of religious reform in Poland-Lithuania.

Anabaptist development in Poland-Lithuania was, however, different in some ways to that elsewhere in Central and Western Europe and, in particular, went in a decidedly Unitarian direction later in the century. In a form recognizable to other European Anabaptists, however, it flourished in the Commonwealth from the 1540s to the 1560s.[54] As Williams observes: "Delay by a quarter of a century in the appearance of Anabaptist characteristics in Polish garb is one with the fact that the Reformation as a whole came somewhat later to this Slavic region."[55] The 1550s proved to be, however, the zenith of the Polish monarchy's openness to reform. Polish Protestantism began fragmenting just when it might have followed the English route to reform, with its own *via media*. A highly effective Counter-Reformation began its work, and as MacCulloch observes: "Crucially, the Polish monarchy never finally broke with the old Church, and that, combined with the unbroken adherence of the bulk of the lower orders in the countryside, proved decisive over a century and a half in securing one of very few successes for Catholic recovery in northern Europe."[56] During Zygmunt III's reign (1587–1632), the arrival of the Jesuits in large numbers helped to ensure that the success of the Catholic Counter-Reformation was complete.[57]

Anabaptist scholars have sometimes ignored Polish Anabaptism, not least because of the anti-trinitarianism adopted later by some of its adherents. Sixteenth-century Polish radicalism is, however, far richer and more complex than such hasty judgments would allow. In the context of sixteenth-century revolutionary Europe, Polish Anabaptism formed a significant part of the wider movement of Evangelical Anabaptism and offers important insights into the discovery of adult baptism, skepticism about creeds, relationships to secular rulers and the debates between non-violent and non-violent approaches to reform. More, its development provides a

53. MacCulloch, *Reformation,* 191.
54. Bochenski, "Polish Anabaptism in the 16th Century."
55. Williams, *Radical Reformation*, 618.
56. MacCulloch, *Reformation,* 341.
57. Davies, *God's Playground*, 131–35.

healthy corrective to the assumption that all early Anabaptism was separatist in character. Anabaptism in Poland offers illuminating insights into the responses of a radical community at a time of wider upheaval. As with Conrad Grebel and his colleagues, Polish radicals were emerging from a reform tradition that grew increasingly disillusioned with the pace of reform, especially after experiencing opposition from former colleagues and allies. But far from hiding in ecclesial ghettoes these radicals, as will be seen, seized the opportunities for the gospel presented to them by the Golden Age.

A CRITICAL ENGAGEMENT WITH SOCIETY—TWENTIETH-CENTURY BRAZIL

A range of attitudes to engagement with "the world" (including Society and a State Church) in the two movements under consideration will be explored over the course of the ensuing chapters. These responses ranged from critical but committed engagement to extreme separation, and between "world-denying" or "world-affirming" communities. Among the liberation theologians there was a clear desire for critical Christian engagement with Society. It is hard to find any equivalents to the separatism of the Schleitheim Confession in their writings, except dismissively. Comblin's critique of some Protestant charismatic spirituality is relevant here: "They have such an individualistic and spiritualized, or at best personalized, concept of salvation, that they fail to see that God did not just create persons, but matter too, the material nature of humankind and with it all human needs of organization and structures. They see the Spirit working within individuals only."[58] The roots of liberation theology's critical engagement with Society on behalf of God's poor can be traced, as has been seen, back to the experiences of the Peruvian and Brazilian Catholic Church from the 1950s and to their calls for both agrarian reform and new educational programs. Looking back over several centuries of Latin American church history, Mainwaring in 1989 commented: "There were many cases of religiously inspired popular protests, but often the Church lined up against, rather than with, such movements. This has changed in the past three decades, though with great differences in the extent and nature of change from one country to the next. At times with dramatic gestures, at times through silent courageous and unpublicized acts of

58. Comblin, *The Holy Spirit and Liberation*, 105.

solidarity, a significant number of Church leaders have taken stances alongside the poor, encouraging them to fight for social change."[59]
Some examples of what this meant in practice will now be considered.

Ana Maria Doimo described some of the social movements inspired, in the late 1970s, by the Catholic Church in Vitoria, Brazil, and also the divisions this gave rise to within the Church.[60] One example was Church support for a public transport protest[61] and another was Church commitment to a reform movement among construction workers.[62] Carol Ann Drogus similarly outlined the impact of base communities in Santo Antonio—one of Sao Paulo's 756 such communities—at the beginning of the 1980s where radicals were heavily involved in the fight for social change.[63] Radical Christians promoted, she suggested, two types of political mobilization: social movements (for day-care, sanitation, water, street paving, street lights and land title rights) and, more generally, electoral participation.[64] An interview with Father Ermanno Allegri, an Italian priest serving in Brazil from 1974, affords another insight into Christian social engagement throughout much of this period.[65] Allegri had come to Brazil from Bolzano, Italy, in 1974 to work in Bahir, in the diocese of Recife. Early in his training at the seminary he met Bishop Camara for the first time. His first Brazilian parish was in its interior, not far from Salvador, in a rural area of some 15,000 people.

Over the course of the 1970s, Allegri witnessed the birth of many grass-roots pastoral communities, working among many Brazilian groupings such as indigenous peoples, fishermen and factory workers. He worked with a pastoral community committed to land reform. No longer were priests simply calling people into a church, he told me, instead they were going out to where people were seeking ways of liberation: "No longer was mission a case of missionaries competing to make either new Protestants or Catholics but rather a call to work with and alongside suffering communities. The theology of liberation was born out of *praxis*. The pastoral practice of liberation." Other voices than those of the landowners

59. Mainwaring, "Grass-roots Catholic Groups," 151.

60. Doimo, "Social Movements," 193–221.

61. Ibid., 197–200.

62. Ibid., 200–205.

63. See Drogus, "Popular Movements," 65.

64. Ibid., 75–81.

65. The interview took place in Genibau, a favela of some 5,000 dwellings and 15,000 people in Conjunto in the State of Ceara, on 11 September 1999, during my visit there as the then President of the Baptist Union of Great Britain.

or the rich began to be heard in Brazil, and new political and religious perspectives began to emerge. One outcome was a new expression of the State Church—base communities—which became a living reality across Brazil and in several other Latin American countries. The strategies of counter-revolution were, Allegri recalled, fierce and unpleasant. His disappointment at the way that Helder Camara's legacy, for example, was being undermined by his successor was palpable. According to Comblin, "The repression by the [new] archbishop was very heavy, very violent, very visible. He expelled 14 priests, those who were working on social problems. He dissolved the Pastoral Land Commission, he dissolved the Human Rights Commission, closed the regional seminary. He took a whole series of quite aggressive measures that provoked opposition."[66] Allegri's recollections of the harassment liberation priests had experienced also included the way that theologians like Leonardo Boff came under suspicion and censure at the direct instigation of the Vatican. He recalled how, as an antidote to radicalism, charismatic Catholicism was actively encouraged by the episcopate. Using a stinging phrase, he described how "sing, sing, sing, pray, pray, pray" became the order of the day, and commented: "A Church of virtual reality cannot survive."

Allegri, in this interview, expressed liberation theology's incarnational understanding of the preferential option for the poor, seeing the movement continuing because ". . .the balance between mystery, spirituality and sharing God's work in the world lies at the heart of Christian faith." Here was a firsthand insight into the movement ranging over some 25 years.[67] From the margins of Society new radical faith communities were born which came, in time, to challenge the prevailing assumptions of both Church and State and to offer viable alternatives. Cook, among others, has drawn attention to the parallels with the Anabaptist movements here: "The experience of the Catholic base communities in Central America is not, after all, so far removed from those of our sixteenth-century forefathers. . ." For him this was an insight that should ". . .move all of us to return to our Radical Reformation roots—to make a conscious, prophetic, preferential option for the poor in obedience to God's Word."[68] As will next be seen from some examples of Anabaptist social and political engagement, *both* movements engaged prophetically with the Society around them.

66. Comblin as interviewed by F. McDonagh, "Brazilian archbishop's vision still challenges church."

67. For the full interview see Bochenski, "Interview with Father Ermanno Allegri."

68. Cook, "Base Ecclesial Communities," 423.