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THE ROMAN CATHOLIC RESPONSE TO THE GROWTH OF PROTESTANTISM  
IN LATIN AMERICA

By

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A Thesis

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## INTRODUCTION

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC RESPONSE TO THE GROWTH OF PROTESTANTISM  
IN LATIN AMERICA

INTRODUCTION

A. The Subject

1. The Subject Stated and Explained.

"Latin America is synonymous with instability."<sup>1</sup> This is the terse evaluation of a prominent Colombian. Governments have risen and fallen; constitutions have come and gone; wars have been the order of the day; even the racial strains have been in a state of change during the days since the Spanish conquest. "In Latin America we find ethnic chaos."<sup>2</sup> With a few exceptions this is the picture one finds in the lands to the South.

The one relatively stable factor in this world of flux has been the Roman Catholic Church which came with the conquistadors. For nearly four centuries it enjoyed almost uncontested supremacy throughout Latin America, but by the second quarter of the twentieth century it began to be apparent that even the position of the Church was not certain.

Richard Pattee, a leading Roman Catholic author and layman,<sup>3</sup> states:

. . . . .

1. German Arciniegas: The State of Latin America, p. 355.
2. W. Stanley Rycroft: Latin America, p. 4.
3. Pattee has been called, "Perhaps our best Inter-Americanist" by Peter Masten Dunne, a leading Jesuit professor and author.

To even the most enthusiastic among those who beat the drums for inter-American Catholic cooperation, the reflection is unavoidable that there has been a definite decline in the prestige and influence of Catholic ideas among the rank and file of Latin Americans who read newspapers and books and who are more or less concerned with the issues of our time.<sup>1</sup>

There are a number of factors which have contributed to this decline of Roman Catholic power, but the one which has stimulated the most activity on the part of the Roman Catholic Church is the growth of Protestantism during the last quarter of a century. Gentes, the missionary organ of the Jesuits, credits the Latin American evangelicals with a 500 per cent increase in membership during this period. The same source makes the significant statement that "a world of 154,000,000 so-called Catholics must be re-Christianized."<sup>2</sup> The program proposed is referred to as the "rescue" of the Roman Church. Such a statement reflects the concern with which this situation is viewed in Catholic circles.

In an interview with George P. Howard, Archbishop Copello, cardinal primate in Argentina, said:

I have been receiving reports regarding the alarming activity of Protestant missionaries who, with seemingly inexhaustible financial resources, are engaged in an intense campaign of proselytism . . . I do not have exact figures as to the number of these missionaries, but I do know that their activities have seriously molested our Catholic people and, consequently, have preoccupied the authorities of the Church.<sup>3</sup>

This preoccupation of the Roman Catholic Church with the Protestant problem is the area of study in this thesis. What is the Roman

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1. Richard Pattee: "Do We Really Understand the Church in Latin America?" America, January 29, 1944, p. 456.
2. "Jesuit Organ Seeks Rescue of Latin American Church," Christian Century, April 23, 1952, p. 484.
3. George P. Howard: Religious Liberty in Latin America? p. 59.



Church doing to retain what power she now has and to regain that which has been lost? This is the question which this investigation will attempt to answer.

## 2. The Subject Justified.

The total program of the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America has been interpreted as an attempt to exclude Protestant missionaries from these countries. This seems to be the force behind the manifesto entitled "Victory and Peace" issued by the Roman Catholic Archbishops and Bishops of the United States on November 14, 1942, which states in part:

Citizens of these countries are bound to us by the closest bonds of religion. They are not merely our neighbors; they are our brothers professing the same faith. Every effort made to rob them of their Catholic religion or to ridicule it or to offer them a substitute for it is deeply resented by the peoples of these countries and by American Catholics. These efforts prove to be a disturbing factor in our international relations . . .

We express the hope that the mistakes of the past which were offensive to the dignity of our Southern brothers, their culture and their religion will not continue.<sup>1</sup>

Individual Catholic leaders and writers have been much more explicit than this in their appeal to government officials in Washington to deny passports to Protestant missionaries to Latin America and to bring about the recall of missionaries already on the field.<sup>2</sup> One such writer is quoted as saying, "Either the Good Neighbor policy or Protestant missionary activity must be abandoned. We cannot save both."<sup>3</sup>

This problem, then, has implications not only for the Protestant missionary enterprise in these lands, but for inter-American relations

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1. Quoted in C. Darby Fulton: The Catholic Protest and Religious Liberty.

2. Wade C. Barclay: Greater Good Neighbor Policy, p. 41.

3. The Sign, October, 1943, p. 184.

generally. The Catholic press in this country has used this issue of the Good Neighbor Policy as one of their prime weapons in arousing the public against Protestant missions in Latin America. Articles by two so-called "eminent Protestants," John Erskine and John W. White, are typical of this type of propaganda.<sup>1</sup>

There is no doubt that the Roman Catholic Church is attempting a revival in the lands to the south. They have recognized the problem at hand and are ready to meet it head on. A Jesuit scholar from this country made the following statement upon returning from an extended trip through these countries: "There must be a vast, active, universal Catholic movement, with its stress upon a renovation in strict Catholic thinking and strict Catholic practice."<sup>2</sup>

### 3. The Subject Delimited.

It would obviously be impossible to deal adequately with the outworkings of this program of the Roman Catholic Church in all twenty of the Latin American countries. It is therefore proposed to center the area of discussion in Colombia.

Colombia is chosen because it seems to be the focal point of Catholic activity, and as a result, there is more information available regarding contemporary events in this country.

Joseph McSorley, a Roman Catholic historian, has this to say about Colombia:

This state has been described as the most Catholic and the least tolerant in South America . . . The earliest national leaders were

. . . . .

1. Fulton, loc. cit.

2. Peter M. Dunne: A Padre Views South America, p. x.

enthusiastic Catholics and in many cases ecclesiastics; and Colombia was the first of the Latin American republics to be recognized by the Holy See (1835).<sup>1</sup>

That Colombia is somewhat of a leader of Catholic nations and perhaps a test-plot is indicated by J. J. Considine, the well-known Maryknoll priest, in his book, Call for Forty Thousand:

A visitor quickly gets the impression that in Colombia there are elements of Catholic vigor that not only are self-maintaining but will more and more overflow in their influence into the world at large. How wonderful it would be if the Church in Colombia could play a leading role in drawing together Catholic forces everywhere for hemispheric action. Many thoughtful Catholics in the United States are hoping and praying for such initiative on the part of their Latin American confreres.<sup>2</sup>

That in a country so thoroughly Roman Catholic as Colombia is said to be there should be such widespread and vigorous Catholic activity directed against Protestant missions helps to point up the seriousness with which the Roman Church regards the situation.

#### B. The Sources For This Study

In order to get the necessary historical background for this study some regular Latin American history texts will be used along with some historical surveys written from the point of view of the Church and its place in the development of these countries.

A knowledge of the basic doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church is necessary in order to understand why the Church has conducted its work in Latin America in the manner in which it has. For this material the writings of recognized Roman Catholic authors will be used as the basic sources, but reliable Protestant works on the subject will also be consulted.

. . . . .

1. Joseph McSorley: An Outline History of the Church by Centuries, p. 803.
2. John J. Considine: Call for Forty Thousand, p. 173.

To get as accurate a picture of the contemporary scene as possible the current writings of both Catholic and Protestant writers will be utilized. It is sometimes very difficult to be dogmatic or even reasonably certain about what represents the true Catholic position.

One of their own writers has said:

Catholics are notoriously unable to hang together. Perhaps it is all to the good that they do not do so, but it means that by no stretch of the imagination can one assert that "Catholics are behind this or that" or "Catholics in Latin America accept unanimously this or that political or social idea."<sup>1</sup>

In the light of this, an attempt will be made to present the facts as they are known without making generalizations on them which are not warranted.

Some of this information will be gleaned from books of recent date as well as from pamphlets, periodical articles, reports, letters, and personal interviews. One especially helpful source is the series of reports on religious persecution in Colombia prepared by the Evangelical Confederation of Colombia.

### C. The Method of Procedure

The first chapter of this thesis will treat the various factors which contribute to the present situation in Latin America. These factors will be considered from several points of view: the theoretical and the practical, the historical and contemporary, the Catholic and the Protestant.

The second chapter will deal with the activities of the Roman Catholic Church which may be termed "non-ecclesiastical." This term is

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1. Pattee, op. cit., p. 457.

used to designate those activities of the Church in areas that are not generally considered church functions. Under this category public education, government and politics, and persecution will be considered. Persecution is included under this heading because while it is often carried out with the sanction and leadership of the clergy, it is not done so as an official church function as in the Inquisition.

The third chapter will deal with the ecclesiastical activities of the Church, that is, those which are officially a part of the program of the Church or which are definitely ecclesiastical in nature. These will include the lay movement known as Catholic Action, the missionary program designed to meet the acute shortage of priests, and other smaller movements within the Church.

At each step an attempt will be made to note the relation between the particular activity and the stimulus provided by the presence and growth of Protestantism. At many points it will only be possible to suggest trends and ideas because of the limitations of this study, but it is hoped that the reader may gain a better understanding of the significant role being played by Protestantism in traditionally Catholic Latin America, and also of the determination and zeal with which the Roman Catholic Church is responding to this stimulus.

## CHAPTER ONE

### FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE PRESENT SITUATION

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#### A. Introduction

"For more than three centuries Protestantism was taboo in Spanish America. This part of the world, from its discovery was a citadel of the 'holy faith' . . ."<sup>1</sup> With the liberation from Spain and the coming of independence came also a lifting of this taboo and the entrance of Protestantism. What had those three centuries produced in the Latin American world? And what was the effect of the entrance of this crusading and powerful new religious group?

These questions are not easy to answer. History is never easy to evaluate, or at least never easy to evaluate objectively. There are, however, certain facts and conditions which are beyond dispute, being recognized by members of nearly every group concerned. From this body of historical information, an attempt will be made in this chapter to glean those factors which contribute significantly to the contemporary religious climate of Latin America.

#### B. Roman Catholic Dogma and Practice

Behind most Roman Catholic practice there is a doctrine of the Church which justifies this practice or at least explains it. It is well, therefore, that the two be considered together.

. . . . .

1. Sante Uberto Barbieri: *Spiritual Currents in Spanish America*, p. 115.

1. In Relation to Salvation and the Church.

a. The Doctrine Stated.

The papal bull, Unam Sanctam, issued by Pope Boniface VIII on November 13, 1302, gives a clear and authoritative pronouncement of the Roman Catholic doctrine of the church. It begins with these words:

Urged on by our faith, we are obliged to believe and hold that there is one holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. And we firmly believe and profess that outside of her there is no salvation nor remission of sins . . .<sup>1</sup>

Its concluding statement is: "Furthermore, that every human creature is subject to the Roman pontiff,--this we declare, say, define, and pronounce to be altogether necessary to salvation."<sup>2</sup>

This 'ex cathedra' statement by the pope that the Roman Catholic Church is the one true Church founded by Jesus Christ outside of which there is no salvation is the basis for the Catholic doctrine of freedom of worship. Such freedom is interpreted as freedom to worship in the true manner as prescribed by the Roman Church, and it is therefore the mission of the Catholic Church to free all men from error by taking to them the true Church.

According to Bishop Francis J. Connell:

[Catholics] believe that the Catholic Church is the only organization authorized by God to teach religious truth and to conduct public worship . . . The very existence of any other church is opposed to the command of Christ that all men should join His one Church.

From this it follows that, as far as God's law is concerned, no one has a real right to accept any religion save the Catholic religion, or to be a member of any church save the Catholic Church, or to practice any form of divine worship save that commanded or sanctioned by the Catholic Church.<sup>3</sup>

. . . . .

1. Philip Schaff: History of the Christian Church, Vol. VI (1949 edition) p. 25.
2. Ibid., p. 27.
3. Francis J. Connell: Freedom of Worship, the Catholic Position, p. 4.



It is important that this principle be understood, because it explains the basic attitude of the Roman Church toward all non-Catholic groups. As Bishop Connell goes on to point out, if the basic premise is accepted, the seemingly arrogant and exclusive stand taken by the Church is the logical outgrowth of their doctrine and therefore perfectly justified.

It is difficult to say what the minimum requirements for salvation are according to the Roman Church, but from the testimony of history it appears that baptism is the one essential. According to A Catechism for Inquirers, "Baptism is the Sacrament which removes Original Sin from our souls, and makes us Christians . . . Baptism imprints a character on our souls which we can never lose."<sup>1</sup> This is also important, because it is primarily on this basis that Latin America is said to be almost completely Roman Catholic.

Father Dunne's comment on this is:

As a matter of fact, while Catholicism is official, and almost all are baptized and are Catholics in name, its practice by the people is deficient. To say that twenty percent of the population are really practicing and churchgoing Catholics would be putting it much too high. And even within such a low figure the men in turn would constitute a slight percentage. <sup>2</sup>

b. The Doctrine Applied in History.

The Spanish conquest of Latin America had three primary agents: "The warrior-conqueror . . . the friar or the priest, and the public official."<sup>3</sup> Wherever the Spanish flag and sword went, the cross

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1. Joseph I. Malloy: A Catechism for Inquirers, p. 27.
2. Peter M. Dunne: A Padre Views South America, p. 5.
3. Barbieri, op. cit., p. 14.

went also. The friars and priests worked closely with both the conquerors and the governors. "The Indians were joined to the church by the thousands through the mere rite of baptism."<sup>1</sup>

Such a practice obviously did not provide anything like adequate instruction of the converts. As a consequence there developed a syncretism of the pagan worship with the worship of the Catholic Church, and this situation seemed to be satisfactory to both parties.<sup>2</sup> This condition has continued essentially unchanged to the present day.<sup>3</sup> This is what is behind the statement in the Jesuit Missionary organ referred to earlier to the effect that all of Latin America must be "re-Christianized."<sup>4</sup> Perhaps it would be more accurate to say just "Christianized," for it is doubtful whether much of Latin America ever was very thoroughly Christian.

Thus, after four hundred years, Latin America is still a missionary territory. The Roman Church draws heavily on both Europe and the United States for clergy and for finances.<sup>5</sup> Bishop Raymond A. Lane of the Maryknoll Fathers has said that the greater part of Latin America "may well be counted among the lost lands of Christendom unless there is a drastic change throughout the area."<sup>6</sup>

#### c. Implications of This Doctrine in the Present.

Because of this admixture of pagan and Christian worship there came to be a greater emphasis on ceremony and ritual than upon content

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1. G. Baez-Camargo: "Latin America" in William K. Anderson, Protestantism, p. 240.
2. Barbieri, op. cit., p. 41-42.
3. Baez-Camargo, op. cit., p. 240.
4. Ante, p. ii.
5. Paul Blanshard: American Freedom and Catholic Power, p. 279.
6. Ibid., p. 280.

in religion. Professor G. Baez-Camargo of Mexico suggests that as a consequence,

revivals usually take the form of fanatical explosions of bigotry, sentimentality, and increased superstition, as well as hedonistic enthusiasm for the big festivals and luxurious demonstrations.<sup>1</sup>

In a more recent article entitled "A Roman Catholic Revival in Latin America," Dr. Baez-Camargo states that one of the major aspects of this present resurgence of Romanism in the south is "purely ceremonial." Elaborate processions, dramatic festivals, pageantry, worship of relics and images, mass rallies, etc., all have a strong appeal to the aesthetically sensitive Latin American soul.<sup>2</sup>

All of this has had its effect on the clergy also. In colonial days there was a great abundance of Spanish priests and friars to minister in the conquered lands, but the church never became indigenous in the true sense of the word, and today one of the greatest problems confronting the Roman Church is the lack of clergy. Father J. J. Considine has written a book entitled Call for Forty Thousand which, as its title suggests, is a statement of the need for tens of thousands of Catholic clergymen for Latin America. The forty thousand is just an estimate, but based on the present census, that is the number of priests necessary so that there would be one priest to every two thousand people. In his book he quotes the editor of the influential Spanish language magazine Revista Javeriana, Padre Juan Alvarez, as saying,

At the bottom of all our problems is a tremendous shortage of clergy, a shortage of such character that it stands as an incognitum which

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1. Baez-Camargo, op. cit., p. 241.
2. G. Baez-Camargo: "A Roman Catholic Revival in Latin America," Presbyterian Survey, January, 1952, Vol. 42, No. 1, p. 5.

gives us concern, which stirs dark clouds on the horizon of our religious future.<sup>1</sup>

One reason for this shortage of clergy is the degenerate nature of the clergy in so many places. "The fact is, the Latin American clergy in certain numbers . . . have been lax, lazy, venal, immoral, ignorant, and corrupt."<sup>2</sup> This is the candid admission of one of their confreres from the United States. As a result of this condition, men from the higher classes of society were not drawn to the vocations, and since there was no middle class as such, most of the clergy came from the lower strata of society.<sup>3</sup>

There is a further consequence of this emphasis on ritual and form and the consequent lack of content in the Catholicism of Latin America. It is the loss of men to the church. Father Dunne, having seen the Latin American scene first hand, is frank to admit that for the most part the male population of these countries is "not much given to the essential practices of his religion."<sup>4</sup>

Dr. Joseph F. Privitera in his book, The Latin American Front, makes this bold statement:

I venture only one prediction in this book, and it is this: that if the Catholics of America are not interested in saving Catholicism in the lands of the south, by the turn of the century much of Latin America will be Protestant . . . My reasons are these: the Latin American male's basic indifference to Catholicism . . .<sup>5</sup>

There are other factors which go into the development of this condition within the Church, but this is the picture as we find it today.

. . . . .

1. J. J. Considine: Call for Forty Thousand, p. 174.
2. Peter M. Dunne: "The Americas: Psychological Attitudes: Politics, Finance, Religion." Bulletin of the National Catholic Educational Association, August 1948, p. 256.
3. Dunne: A Padre Views South America, p. 267.
4. Ibid., p. 265.
5. Joseph F. Privitera: The Latin American Front, p. 39.

Thus when Protestant missionaries enter these countries, they do not consider it to be proselyting from the Catholic Church when they attempt to present the message of Christianity to these essentially unchurched peoples. On the other hand, because they own a Catholic baptismal certificate, they are life members of the Roman Church and therefore, according to Catholic standards, Christians.

## 2. In Relation to Education.

Moving from this brief sketch of the condition of the Church as such to the field of education, other factors which contribute to the present situation in Latin America become evident. Again the first point to be considered is the Catholic philosophy behind the Church's educational program.

### a. Educational Philosophy of the Catholic Church.

Roman Catholic law treats education, along with such other matters as marriage and clerical privileges, as a matter of mixed jurisdiction, that is, matters which belong partly to the jurisdiction of the Church and partly to the jurisdiction of the State. In the case of education, a third is added--the home.<sup>1</sup> As to which of the three is primary, Pope Pius X in his bull, Pascendi, declared that in matters of mixed jurisdiction "the church as queen and mistress has supreme right of control. And this may be inferred from the pope's claim to be the vicegerent of God on earth."<sup>2</sup> In Father Treacy's simplified edition of the encyclical, Divini Illius Magistri, this is made more explicit

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1. Gerald Treacy: S.J.: Education--True or False? p. 6.
2. David Schaff: Our Fathers Faith and Ours, p. 562.

by the statement, "In the first place education belongs pre-eminently to the Church."<sup>1</sup>

Again, it is the right and duty of the Church to watch over the entire education of her children, in all schools, public and private. This is not limited to the giving of religious instruction. It extends to every branch of learning, and every educational method in so far as morality and religion are concerned.<sup>2</sup>

The family has both the right and the duty to educate, especially under the guidance of the Church. The government should not infringe upon this right by insisting on attendance of children to government schools. It is rather "the right and duty of the State to protect the moral and religious education of youth by not allowing anything to impede it."<sup>3</sup>

This is the general position of the Roman Church briefly stated, and it allows for a number of interpretations. In Latin America it has been given a literal and strict interpretation as a general rule. The Church has expected the State to make Roman Catholic teaching compulsory in all schools<sup>4</sup> and thus to "protect the moral and religious education of youth." The philosophy which guides them is summed up in this judgment: "The neutral or lay school, from which RELIGION is excluded betrays true education. THE SCHOOL IF NOT A TEMPLE IS A DEN."<sup>5</sup>

b. This Philosophy Applied in History.

In colonial days in Latin America education was almost entirely in the hands of the Church. Although occasionally a civil official such

. . . . .

1. Treacy, op. cit., p. 7.

2. Ibid., p. 8.

3. Ibid., p. 13.

4. Cf. George P. Howard: Religious Liberty in Latin America? p. 47.

5. Treacy, op. cit., p. 20.

as the local "cabildos" or the royal governor might establish a school, it was usually the religious orders such as the Jesuits, Franciscans, and Dominicans who were responsible for the founding of the secondary schools. In the colleges which were early established the professors were usually priests.<sup>1</sup>

In no sense could education be said to have been universal in the colonies. Rather, it was a luxury to go to school at all. Most of the population remained illiterate. The schools were primarily for the clergy and the higher classes of society. Even at the time of the liberation of the colonies from Spain, the universities were said to be "to train a 'fundamentalist' clergy, divorced from the physical world, hostile to mathematics and science."<sup>2</sup>

With the establishment of the Inquisition in the New World during the last quarter of the sixteenth century came the entrance of the Society of Jesus, or the Jesuits, to the colonies. This order became very powerful and soon was the leading religious order, especially in the field of education.<sup>3</sup> They worked especially among the higher classes and in many ways were responsible for laying the foundations for the movement toward independence. They became so powerful that in 1767 they were expelled from Latin America, but following the revolution they were eventually readmitted and today are the backbone of the power of the Roman Church especially in the field of university education.<sup>4</sup>

. . . . .

1. Tom B. Jones and W. Donald Beatty: An Introduction to Hispanic American History, pp. 220, 221.
2. German Arciniegas: The State of Latin America, p. 359.
3. Barbieri, op. cit., p. 45.
4. Ibid., p. 46.

Since almost all of the schools were run by religious orders, the Church had little or no difficulty in carrying out its philosophy of education during the first two centuries of Latin American history.

In the field of strictly religious education of the masses of the people by the priest through sermons and ministries of the Church, the instruction was as deficient as was the teaching of the three R's in the secular realm. Some of the friars of the colonial days were very devout men, but as the syncretism between the native and Christian worship developed, the clergy began to take on the same atmosphere, and down to the present day "numbers of the clergy . . . have been more given to the promotion of specialized devotions, of a special shrine, of a saint, than in explaining to the people the rational basis of their faith."<sup>1</sup> As a result there is a general ignorance even in spiritual matters, and many of the intelligentsia and higher class have become indifferent to their religion if not actually anticlerical.

The establishment of republics following the liberation from Spanish rule brought constitutional governments to most of these young nations, constitutions often based to a large extent upon the constitution of the United States. This meant a change in the relation between Church and state in many cases, and thus a change in the control exercised by the Church over education.

The hitherto closed land was now open to other religious groups, and close on the heels of the independence movement came the beginnings of Protestant missions. Protestantism "came in at first

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1. Dunne: A Padre Views South America, p. 267.



not primarily as a religious movement, but as an educational system."<sup>1</sup> This, of course, was in direct violation of Roman Catholic educational philosophy, and it was met with determined opposition. The remarkable reception given to Protestant educational efforts then became a stimulus to the Catholics.<sup>2</sup> This has been particularly true in the past twenty years during which time Protestantism has made its greatest gains. What the Roman Church is doing in this field today will be dealt with in a later chapter.

### 3. In Relation to Government.

Another doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church which figures prominently in a consideration of the present situation in Latin America is that of Church and State. This is closely related to both of the preceding areas of dogma considered.

#### a. The Roman Catholic Doctrine of Church and State.

Turning again to the papal bull, Unam Sanctam, a positive statement of the Catholic position of Church and State is found.

That in her and within her power are two swords, we are taught in the Gospels, namely, the spiritual sword and the temporal sword . . . The latter is to be used for the Church, the former by the Church; the former by the hand of the priest, the latter by the hand of princes and kings, but at the nod and sufferance of the priest.<sup>3</sup>

This utterance was made in connection with the statement of the doctrine of the Church quoted earlier,<sup>4</sup> and it is an outgrowth of that doctrine. Because the Church is ordained directly of God, its

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1. Barbieri, op. cit., p. 115.

2. Cf. Ibid., pp. 125-126.

3. Schaff: History of the Christian Church, Vol. VI (1949 edition) p. 26.

4. Ante, p. 2.

power is ultimate in every realm of life. It is not denied that there is a temporal power vested in the government, but it is derived from the higher spiritual power. Since the Roman Catholic Church is held to be the one, true Church of God, it is the medium of authority.<sup>1</sup> The temporal power is to be used "at the nod and sufferance of the priest."<sup>2</sup>

The power of government is not derived from the consent of the governed as in a democracy. If the rulers are elected, it is merely the means whereby the people "determine by whom authority shall be exercised."<sup>3</sup> This is the pronouncement of the papal encyclical, Diuturnum Illud, issued by Leo XIII. Since the authority of the ruler comes from God, it is absolute and the ruler should "be able to enforce obedience so completely that disobedience to the command is sinful."<sup>4</sup> Should the State deviate from what the Church holds to be the law of God and order that which is contrary to "Natural Law or God's Law," it is transgressing the bounds of its authority and perverting justice. In such a case, it is right to disobey the authority of the State.<sup>5</sup>

In his encyclical on true liberty, Libertas Praestantissimum, Pope Leo XIII says in effect that the result of this position of authority is that "there is no such thing as unconditional freedom of thought, speech and worship compatible with true liberty."<sup>6</sup> True liberty is said to consist in obedience to the supreme, eternal law of God, and in this case, that law as interpreted by the Church.

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1. Cf. Schaff: History of the Christian Church, Vol. VI (1949 edition) p. 26.
2. Ibid.
3. Treacy: Catholic Political Philosophy, p. 10.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., p. 12.
6. Ibid., p. 23.

Religious liberty, then, is dependent upon this doctrine of Church and State, and the question of religious liberty is one that has loomed large in Latin America since the coming of constitutional governments in these countries.

b. This Doctrine Applied in History.

This position of the Roman Catholic Church in relation to Church and State has played a paramount role in the history of the Latin American nations. Government in the colonies was patterned after that of Spain with an essential union of Church and State. The Church was, in a sense, subservient to the king, but the king received his crown from the pope thus recognizing the higher authority of the Church.

This condition allowed the Church to carry on its program much to its own liking. The schools were built and maintained at government expense,<sup>1</sup> but operated primarily by ecclesiastics. At times the military forces of the government were utilized by the Church for "making 'conversions', really achieved by military coercion. Such accessions to the Church were known as entradas (entries) or conquistas de almas (conquests of souls)."<sup>2</sup> In one instance, 32,000 souls were added to the Church in this manner.<sup>3</sup>

There was a further consequence of this relation, however. As a secular historian has observed, "The close alliance of the Church and the State was very useful in keeping the colonists chained to old ways and old ideas."<sup>4</sup> Education, as has been noted, was very limited;

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1. Dunne: A Padre Views South America, p. 228.

2. Mary Williams: The People and Politics of Latin America, p. 184.

3. Ibid.

4. Jones and Beatty, op. cit., p. 182.

and on the other hand, it was largely the results of the efforts of the educated peoples that brought about the revolution. It was to the Church's advantage to keep most of the people in a state of essential ignorance, but this policy eventually has led to much of their present difficulty.

When the revolution did come bringing independent, constitutional governments, some of the bishops pulled up and returned to Spain while many of those who remained refused to recognize and cooperate with the new governments. This disgusted the thinking men of the day and led many of them to become anticlericals.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, the ideal of democracy had been fired in the hearts and minds of the people in general, and the Church became to them a symbol of the repository of Hispanidad, "the antithesis of everything democratic in political ideals and practice."<sup>2</sup> This, along with the other factors already noted, helps to explain the present condition of the Catholic Church in the Latin American countries.

The Church, however, did not give up its hold on the governments easily nor did it abandon its stated doctrine. Most of the constitutions while providing for religious liberty, still recognized the Roman Catholic Church as the Church of the State. And the fact remains that almost one hundred percent of the people were baptized Catholics, and the clergy could still effect a large measure of control over the people and thus over the country through religious measures if not through direct governmental control.

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1. Dunne: A Padre Views South America, pp. 265-266.

2. Wade C. Barclay: Greater Good Neighbor Policy, p. 39.

c. Roman Catholic Political Doctrine.

Since the next two chapters will deal with the contemporary scene as it is found in Colombia, it will be well to consider the role of the Roman Church in the political development of that country. In this country as in perhaps no other Latin American nation the Church has held its grip on politics.<sup>1</sup>

Colombia early divided into two political camps--liberal and conservative. "The liberals favored federalism, extension of the suffrage, and limitation of the Church; the conservatives were centralists, oligarchs, and proclericals."<sup>2</sup> The Conservative Party or church party has had control of the government during most of the history since independence except for periods from 1849-1884 and 1930-1946. Even during the time when the liberals were in power, the Church enjoyed a position of considerable influence and its position was not seriously challenged. It must be remembered that even the liberals were Catholics, but they were not as thorough-going Catholics as were their Conservative opponents.

Colombia was the first of the Latin American republics to be recognized by the Vatican (1835),<sup>3</sup> and in 1888 a concordat with the papacy was put into effect giving to the Church "all the powers and privileges it had possessed during the colonial regime, except inquisitorial authority, and providing for payment for confiscated ecclesiastical property."<sup>4</sup> From this time until 1930 the president elected was always the candidate named by the Archbishop of Bogotá.<sup>5</sup>

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1. A. Stuart McNairn: Do You Know? p. 98.
2. Jones and Beatty, op. cit., p. 351.
3. Joseph McSorley: An Outline History of the Church by Centuries, p. 803.
4. Williams, op. cit., p. 533.
5. Dunne: A Padre Views South America, p. 228.

In 1930 the archbishop was unable to make up his mind, throwing his support first to one candidate and then to another, with the result that the Conservative Party was split and the Liberals won the election. This meant certain set-backs for the Church as far as its direct power was concerned because the Liberals were headed by the anti-clerical intellectuals and were the majority party. But in spite of this the Church was found to be in "thriving condition" in 1944.<sup>1</sup>

The elections of 1946 brought a split in the Liberal Party and a consequent Conservative victory. This brought into power an ultra-conservative element led by such men as the present President, Laureano Gomez. In his newspaper, El Siglo, the Fascist governments of Europe found praise and support even during days of Liberal control, and at a great act of homage to the Falange held in 1937 on the occasion of a visit of an agent of Franco to Bogotá, Gomez said:

Spain, marching forward as the sole defender of Christian civilization, leads the Western nations in the reconstruction of the empire of Hispanidad, and we inscribe our names in the roster of its phalanxes with unutterable satisfaction . . . We bless God who has permitted us to live in this era of unforeseen transformations, and who has given it to us to utter, with a cry that springs from the very depths of our heart: "Up Catholic, Imperial Spain!"<sup>2</sup>

With such leadership, the Catholic Church has again gained a position of dominance and is putting her philosophy of religious freedom into practice.

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1. Ibid., p. 229.

2. Arciniegas, op. cit., p. 63.

### C. Protestant Missionary Activity

The dominant factor in the shaping of the situation now found in Latin America is naturally the dogma and practice of the Roman Catholic Church, but into this apparently totally Catholic land has come a second factor which, if it has not changed the countries themselves, it is at least causing some changes in the Catholic Church in those lands. "Even in the less receptive republics the Evangelical forces are putting down deep roots and influencing the national life in far greater measure than their actual numbers would suggest."<sup>1</sup>

#### 1. Historical Sketch of Protestant Missions in Latin America.

"Soon after the movement of independence started in Spanish America, Protestantism began its march in the prohibited land."<sup>2</sup> Three centuries earlier a group of Huguenots had come to Brazil, but after five of them had met martyr's deaths, the rest were expelled, and it was two hundred years before any further Protestant work was attempted. This time it was by the Moravian Brethren in the West Indies and Dutch Guiana.<sup>3</sup> But it was not until 1818 when Mr. Diego Thomson landed in Argentina that Protestant missions really took root in the hitherto closed continent.

For about twenty years Mr. Thomson travelled from place to place introducing the new Lancastrian school system and selling Bibles for the British and Foreign Bible Society. Thus the entrance of Protestantism into Latin America was almost the exact opposite of the entrance

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1. McNairn, op. cit., p. 142.
2. Barbieri, op. cit., p. 115.
3. W. S. Rycroft: Latin America, p. 30.

of Roman Catholicism. It came with the Bible as its main weapon and with a passion for popular education.<sup>1</sup>

Organized mission work, in contrast to the itinerant nature of Mr. Thomson's work, was begun in 1835 with the coming of Rev. Fountain E. Pitts of the Methodist Episcopal Church to Rio de Janeiro. The following year John Dempster founded Methodist work in Argentina. Other Protestant work "was begun in Colombia in 1856 and in Mexico in 1859. By the end of the century the movement had spread to all the republics."<sup>2</sup>

For about the first century of their history, Protestant missions grew slowly as they laid the ground work for the church which was to be built. As their constructive, consistent efforts gained the confidence of the people, the fruit of their labors began to increase. Between the years 1910 and 1940 the population of Latin America increased by 113 per cent while during the same period the number of Protestants increased by 319 per cent.<sup>3</sup> The past five years have seen a growth of fifty per cent, and today the Evangelical community of Latin America is reckoned conservatively at 3,000,000.<sup>4</sup>

## 2. Characteristics of Protestant Missions.

### a. Emphasis on Education.

As was noted previously, Protestant missions began primarily as an educational movement,<sup>5</sup> and this emphasis has continued to characterize their work down to the present. Excluding the West Indies,

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1. Barbieri, op. cit., p. 116.

2. Rycroft, loc. cit.

3. George Howard: We Americans: North and South, p. 105.

4. Ibid., p. 87.

5. Ante, p. 11.



Evangelicals now have 621 elementary schools, 119 secondary schools, 4 teacher training institutions, and 34 Bible schools.<sup>1</sup> Besides these such colleges as the following were begun by and operate under Protestant missionary auspices: Mackenzie College in São Paulo, Brazil; Bennett College for girls in Rio de Janeiro; Ward College in Buenos Aires; Crandon Institute in Montevideo, Uruguay; Santiago College in Santiago, Chile; Colegio Internacional in Asunción, Paraguay; Gammon Institute in Lavras, Brazil; and Granbery in Juiz de Fora, Brazil. There are also several institutions of higher learning operating under Evangelical leadership in the West Indies.<sup>2</sup>

From these schools have gone leaders into all walks of life, and although many of them did not leave the institutions as Protestants, they did take with them some fundamental attitudes toward life which have done much for the cause of religious liberty in these lands.<sup>3</sup>

In connection with this educational effort has gone a literacy campaign, so that today literacy is far above the average among Evangelicals.<sup>4</sup> To meet the growing demand for Christian literature resulting from this upsurge in literacy on the part of the Protestant Community a number of publishing houses have been established. Among these are the Union Publishing House in Buenos Aires; the Methodist Imprenta in the same city; the Baptist Publishing House in Rio de Janeiro; and Casa Unida de Publicaciones in Mexico City. These along with many book stores serve as the means of distribution for an increasing volume of evangelical literature.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Howard, op. cit., p. 105.

2. Ibid., pp. 89-90.

3. Rycroft, op. cit., p. 31.

4. Ibid.

5. Howard, op. cit., pp. 87-88.

b. Emphasis on the Bible.

Hand in hand with this emphasis on education and literacy has gone the distribution of the Scriptures. The reading text in the first schools founded by Mr. Diego Thomson was the Bible, and since that time portions of the Scriptures have been translated into many of the Indian dialects and circulated through the cooperation of the American and the British and Foreign Bible Societies. The stories of the Bible colporteurs is one of the romances of Latin American missions.<sup>1</sup>

c. Social Service.

In many places the Protestants have found the key to the hearts of the people in the social services which they have been able to render to them. An example of such work is La Boca Mission in a congested area of Buenos Aires which offers "a free kindergarten, a gymnasium, a boys' club, classes in arts and crafts for men and women, a free medical clinic, and sports facilities."<sup>2</sup> Throughout Latin America wherever Protestant missions have gone, such services on some scale have been offered to the people.

Another example of this type of thing is to be found in the mission farms. Outstanding among these is the one at El Vergel, Chile. Here nearly one thousand people live and work together under the guidance of four missionary farm experts to learn the latest and most up-to-date farming methods. This practical ministry pays off many times in arriving at the ultimate goal of missionary endeavor.

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1. Ibid., pp. 101-103.

2. Ibid., pp. 90-91.

Through the medium of radio much is being done to instruct the Indians and the common workers on such matters as hygiene, social purity, and other matters which benefit both the individuals concerned and the community in which they live. The Voice of the Andes, HCJB, in Quito, Ecuador, has been commended by the government for this service and has been granted long-term leases because of it.

d. Evangelism.

As important as all these other characteristics may be, the primary purpose and function of Protestant missions is to take the living Christ to these peoples who have been kept in "the bondage of ignorance, superstition, idolatry and demonology."<sup>1</sup> All of the preceding are means to this end. The printed Word has perhaps been the most important force for evangelism in these countries. Radio also has become an exceedingly successful means of reaching thousands with the Gospel message who might otherwise never hear.

Preaching has always been one of the distinctive marks of Protestantism, and it is not absent from the work in Latin America. For many years, however, fear kept the people away from the meetings of the Evangelicals. Even today many of the people are bound by the warnings and threats of the priests, but in the last few years, mass evangelism has met with increasing success. A series of such meetings in the larger cities of Latin America has just been concluded by a team led by Israel Garcia and featuring Anton Marco, a converted opera singer. The campaigns were usually opened with a concert by Marco which almost always drew

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1. Rycroft, op. cit., p. 32.

capacity crowds. With interest thus stimulated, preaching services were begun, and the results surprised even the most optimistic.<sup>1</sup>

Protestantism in Latin America is definitely on the move, and will increasingly prove to be a factor to be reckoned with.

### 3. Roman Catholic Reaction to Protestant Missionary Activity.

The reaction on the part of the Roman Catholic Church to this growth in Protestant missions has varied greatly in various places and among various groups. The general attitude of the liberal American Catholic is that "there has been too much protesting, not enough acting."<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, South America was "evidently worried and often angry."<sup>3</sup>

If the Roman Church were run on a democratic basis, the picture might be quite different because the average Catholic layman even in Latin America is very cordial to the presence of Protestants. Dr. George P. Howard concludes his chapter on "Do Latin Americans Resent Protestant Missions?" with this statement:

These and many other testimonies that could be presented . . . serve to indicate that, if any resentment against Protestant missionary activity in Latin America exists, it will be found almost exclusively among the small group of clerical reactionaries both in South America and in the United States.<sup>4</sup>

Even the Jesuit professor, Father Dunne, says, "It has from the first been my opinion that the clergy exaggerated the harm being done by this propaganda. Lay opinion was much more moderate."<sup>5</sup>

The more moderate clerical reaction has been that "perhaps a little opposition will aid the South American Church to bestir itself

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1. Latin American Mission, Inc.: Campaign Echoes, No. 6.
2. Dunne: A Padre Views South America, p. 271.
3. Ibid., p. 272.
4. Howard: Religious Liberty in Latin America? p. 71.
5. Dunne: A Padre Views South America, p. 274.

to greater endeavor."<sup>1</sup>

Such practical suggestions as this were made:

If Protestants have a broadcasting system, let Catholics get a better and bigger one. Instead of spending \$50,000 on a jeweled crown for a statue of the Virgin Mary, let them put the money into Christian social works. Let the parish priest at Christmas time instead of buying new candelabra for the altar of his church, use the Christmas offerings to buy food and presents for the poor children of his parish.<sup>2</sup>

This is the usual side of the picture presented by Roman Catholic writers, and as will be seen in the following chapters, much of this type of work is being undertaken by the Roman Church in Latin America. There is little question that this program is being undertaken because of the stimulus of the growth in Protestant missions.<sup>3</sup> It has been suggested, however, by one who is close to the subject, that Roman Catholic "social work" tends "to be only a tool for political domination."<sup>4</sup>

There is another side to the picture, however, which is not as bright as might appear thus far. The reactionary Catholic clergy has launched a campaign of anti-Protestant "hate propaganda," and even open, physical persecution and violence. Typical of the former is found in Catholic Tract No. 17 entitled "The Protestant Religion, A Moral Danger," circulated in Ibagué, Tolima, Colombia. This tract says in part:

The Evangelicals complain because the Catholic Church burns Protestant Bibles. And she will continue to burn them while they are plagued with errors as they are at present . . . All present-day

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1. Ibid., p. 277.

2. Ibid., p. 277.

3. Barbieri, op. cit., p. 125.

4. Baez-Camargo: "A Roman Catholic Revival in Latin America," Presbyterian Survey, January 1952, p. 6.

Protestants defend successive polygamy and polyandry . . . There does not exist a single Protestant sect which condemns the killing of the incurably sick and the insane . . . All of their theologians, bishops, Presidents of Synods and other authorities cry with all their might for the killing of children with weak intelligence or grave physical defects.<sup>1</sup>

Concerning the persecution, Peter Schmid, a Swiss journalist, has this to say, "When a few young fanatics in Spain attacked a Protestant chapel, the world was shocked. But this was nothing as compared with the systematic persecution of the Protestants in Colombia."<sup>2</sup>

This is just an indication of the effect that the growth of Protestant missions has had within the folds of the Roman Church. The response in terms of the actual program now being carried out will be considered in the following chapters.

#### D. The Rise of Nationalism

Before leaving the section on the factors contributing to the present situation, a word should be said concerning the rise of nationalism in the Latin American world.

The coming of independence to the colonies inaugurated a course of events that was destined to alter many features of this continent. "The changes in Latin America have not been mere surface transformations. As the cities have grown and education has become more general, its people have begun to acquire a greater awareness of the world about them."<sup>3</sup> No longer were they to be ordered about by

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1. Quoted in Colombian Clippings, Spring 1952, p. 16.
2. Peter Schmid: "Sinners, Saints and Civil War," American Mercury, September 1952, p. 30.
3. Arciniegas, op. cit., p. 5.

another nation. They were now independent republics, and they intended to act as such. Thus a sense of nationalism began to arise.

In 1947 the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance was signed calling for solidarity among the American republics, but according to an expert in the field, "solidarity does not at present exist in the Western Hemisphere."<sup>1</sup> His reason: "Nationalism is stronger in Latin America than the obligations and implications of the treaty, and nationalism is on the rise."<sup>2</sup>

The Catholics have been quick to take advantage of this condition. Protestantism has been made out to be an attempt to "Yankeefy" Latin America, and therefore the people have been urged to pray and work for the expulsion of these heretics.<sup>3</sup> "This subtle appeal to nationalism is one which provides strong ground for Roman Catholicism, intertwined as it is with national tradition and custom, and seemingly part of the state's solidarity."<sup>4</sup>

To quote Father Dunne again:

One of the arguments often used by the clergy is that Catholicism is the great bond of national unity. Break that, and the nations will dissolve. I must confess that upon reflection I cannot see the force of this argument. History seems to contradict it. If Catholicism were the strong bond of union, then Greater Colombia would never have broken up . . . I looked at Catholic Spain and I saw it a most divided nation . . . I looked at the United States and England with their divergent religions and I saw them united. No, loyalties other than religious have been in history a greater bond of national unity and strength.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, although the argument is perhaps not a valid one, it is nevertheless used, and used effectively by members of the Roman hierarchy

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1. Blair Bolles: "Danger Signals in Latin America," Foreign Policy Bulletin, April 15, 1952, p. 3.
2. Ibid.
3. Cf. Elisabeth Fletcher: "Colombia Today," Latin American Evangelist, September-October 1952, p. 149.
4. Cecil Northcott: Religious Liberty, p. 112.
5. Dunne: A Padre Views South America, p. 274.

not as thoughtful or not as honest as Father Dunne. This seems to be the logic behind the manifesto issued by the Catholic Archbishops and Bishops of the United States in 1942 calling for the exclusion of Protestant missionaries from Latin America.<sup>1</sup>

#### E. Summary and Conclusion

Since the days of the Spanish conquest Latin America has been considered a Roman Catholic land. With the conquistadores came also the representatives of the Spanish Catholic Church to "Christianize" the pagans in the New World. Through the rite of baptism a continent was added to the folds of the Church. Because too often there was little more than baptism, however, the religion of the people became primarily form without much content. Since the Church and the State were so closely connected, other religions were excluded from the colonies, and with no opposition to keep them vigilant, even the clergy became lax and degenerate. The coming of independence brought the rise of a class of anticlericals who rebelled against the authoritarianism of the old Hispanidad concept, and it also brought freedom of worship and the coming of Protestantism. This dynamic witness entered a land that was Christian in name only to demonstrate the true meaning of Christianity. Education, social work, high ethical standards, and the like soon began to make a deep impression on this neglected continent and on the lethargic Roman Catholic Church as well. As more and more barriers have been broken down, Protestantism has been increasingly fruitful to the extent that the Roman Church has today entered upon an extensive program to regain its lost power and to consolidate its present position.

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1. Ante, p.vii; Barclay, op. cit., p. 40.



## CHAPTER TWO

### NON-ECCLESIASTICAL ACTIVITIES OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

## CHAPTER TWO

### NON-ECCLESIASTICAL ACTIVITIES OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

#### A. Introduction

The distinction between the non-ecclesiastical and the ecclesiastical activities of the Roman Church, which forms the basis for chapters II and III, is premised primarily on the dual nature of the Catholic Church. This dual nature was suggested earlier in the quotation from the papal bull, Unam Sanctam, regarding the spiritual sword and the temporal sword.<sup>1</sup> The former has to do with the distinctly religious activities and functions of the Church, while the latter has to do with the non-religious functions which form the basis for the term "political Catholicism."<sup>2</sup>

In answer to the question, "Is it your impression that Protestants meddle in politics?" Dr. Anel Ossorio, former Spanish Ambassador to Argentina, answered,

The answer is simple: Protestants as individuals do intervene in politics, but the Protestant churches as an organization do not. This is the main point of difference between the Catholic Church and the Protestant churches. The Catholic Church has always been in politics. The popes have had temporal power, have negotiated alliances and treaties, have waged wars . . .<sup>3</sup>

And in commenting on the role of the church in politics, Father Dunne says, "We can apply to Latin America what has been said about the higher

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1. Ante, p. 11.

2. Rycroft: The Menace of Political Catholicism.

3. Howard: Religion in Spain and Latin America, section III.

clergy in Medieval Europe, 'a bishop could not avoid politics even if he would.'<sup>1</sup> It is with certain aspects of this second phase of Catholicism that this chapter will be concerned.

It perhaps should be reiterated at this point that it is impossible to say dogmatically that the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America is wholly behind this or that.<sup>2</sup> One has only to read the various Catholic periodicals in this country to discover that this is so, but this lack of agreement is more obvious in South America.<sup>3</sup> In the light of this, an attempt will be made to present the facts as they are known today.

#### B. Public Education

In any country education is a primary factor in shaping and controlling the nature and destiny of its people. Latin America today presents a picture of great contrasts in this field. On the one hand there are the highly educated, highly cultured intellectuals in the larger cities. The people of Bogata, for example, like to refer to their city as "the Athens of America;" and John Gunther has referred to the dinner table conversations there as "staggeringly intellectual-literary."<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, however, there are still large numbers of the population who can neither read nor write. As a result, Colombia, with her Latin American neighbors, is education conscious.

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1. Dunne: A Padre Views South America, p. 374.

2. Ante, p. x.

3. Cf. Pattee: "Do We Really Understand Latin America?" America, January 29, 1944, p. 457.

4. Albert J. Nevins: "Whipping Boy for Bigots," The Sign, September, 1952, p. 28.

The Catholic Church in Colombia is also education conscious. In 1945 the Inter-American Congress of Catholic Educators met in Bogata and according to Padre Alvarez, editor of Revista Javeriana,

The significance of the Congress . . . lies in the fact that it was the first step of the Catholics of the two continents toward a co-ordinated and joint effort to face continental organizations which seek to turn the cultural, religious, and social life of our countries away from the traditional course of Catholic philosophy and ethics.<sup>1</sup>

The "continental organizations" referred to are probably Protestantism and Communism. What follows will show that one of them is certainly Protestantism.

#### 1. Activity in Relation to Public Schools.

##### a. The Extent of Public Education.

Public education in Latin America has been comparatively slow in developing, so that today UNESCO reports that about 80 per cent of this continent is still illiterate.<sup>2</sup> For several centuries education was for a privileged few. At the time of the independence movements there were no schools designed to prepare the people for the responsibilities and privileges of independence. "There were, to be sure, old and established universities, but their purpose was to train a 'fundamentalist' clergy, divorced from the physical world, hostile to mathematics and science."<sup>3</sup> This problem was not easily solved. A native of Colombia says:

In many places the conflict with the Church endured for one hundred years. The native sons had to be broken like broncos to make them reasonable and tractable, for their first idea was to assume the privileges the Spaniards had enjoyed. Even today, after the lapse of more than a century, there are still small conservative groups who

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1. Considine: Call for Forty Thousand, p. 174.
2. Howard: We Americans, p. 103.
3. Arciniegas: The State of Latin America, p. 359.

regard themselves as the legal heirs of the privilege of governing the people by divine right, holding the masses to be of different and inferior clay.<sup>1</sup>

In Colombia today efforts are being put forth by the government to expand the educational system of the country. "The Colombian government sets aside 10 per cent of the national budget for education."<sup>2</sup> This educational program is second only to that of Mexico in scope, but even at that "the public school system is relatively very meager."<sup>3</sup>

b. Measures of Control Exercised by the Catholic Church.

In speaking of the general revival of the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America, G. Baez-Camargo says, "A widespread awakening of interest in education and a concerted effort to get Catholic indoctrination into public schools has also become a part of this revival."<sup>4</sup> There is no doubt that a significant element in the current movement within the Catholic Church in reaction to the factors dealt with in the first chapter is a new interest in education. Since Colombia, like the rest of Latin America, has always been a Catholic country, the Church has been concerned not only with its own educational system, but also with the development of the public schools by the civil government. Because of its close connections with the powers which are in control at the present, the Church has been able to keep its finger on the growing school system. "The Ministry of Education is completely controlled by the priests, who in many parts of the country are the very school inspectors themselves."<sup>5</sup>

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1. Ibid.
2. Nevins, loc. cit.
3. William Gillam: Personal Letter, February 10, 1953, p. 1.
4. Baez-Camargo: "A Roman Catholic Revival in Latin America," Presbyterian Survey, January 1952, p. 6.
5. Gillam, op. cit., p. 1.

Not only does the Church in this manner exercise a direct control on the educational system, but it also goes a step farther by sending priests into the schools to teach classes in religion and to lead in spiritual exercises.<sup>1</sup> The students are required to study the Catholic catechism and to attend mass regularly. The only place this is not true is in the evangelical schools, and, as will be seen, this has become a factor in the closing of Protestant schools.

A third type of control used in some places is the control of normal schools. In most countries these schools "are dominated by the Roman Catholics to the exclusion of Evangelicals . . ."<sup>2</sup> By thus controlling the education of public school teachers, they can be reasonably certain that the atmosphere of the school rooms will be Catholic.

## 2. Activity in Relation to Roman Catholic Schools.

Although the Church is able to maintain a significant measure of control over the public schools, such a system is not in keeping with their philosophy of education. As was noted previously,<sup>3</sup> the Catholic Church places all authority for education ultimately in the hands of the church, and while it is a matter of mixed jurisdiction, the ideal situation is to be found in schools operated by the church. For this reason, the Roman Church has established in Colombia what is probably "the most extensive parochial school system of any country in Latin America . . ."<sup>4</sup>

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1. Ibid.

2. E. M. Lee: "School Evangelism in Latin America," International Review of Missions, April, 1952, p. 189.

3. Ante, pp. 7-8.

4. Gillam, loc. cit.

The influence of Protestant missions in this education expansion is illustrated by the experience of a missionary who was going to a certain city to open a school.

Someone, ignorant of his purpose, asked him what he was going to do there. The missionary answered, "I am going to establish three schools." The other was amazed, and asked why he was going to establish three schools at a time. The missionary then replied jokingly, "Well, I am going to establish just one, but pretty soon the Roman Catholics will start two more so as to check our influence." And really this is no joke, for it has happened more than once. Where Protestants have gone with the intention of doing something new, the Roman Church has gone too.<sup>1</sup>

The activity of the Roman Church in relation to schools especially for the training of clergy and religious leaders will be considered in the last chapter.

### 3. Activity in Relation to Protestant Schools.

Not only has the presence of Protestant mission schools been a stimulus to educational activity on the part of the Roman Church; it has also called forth open opposition to such schools. In the light of the present situation in Colombia, the future of such schools is very uncertain.

#### a. Discrimination Against Protestant Schools.

Protestantism from the first was an educational movement in Latin America. Wherever the missionaries went they took a passion to teach the people to read, and to teach them how to use their talents and to exercise their privileges as a free people. To this end schools were established, and in many areas served as models of modern, efficient

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1. Barbieri: *Spiritual Currents in Spanish America*, p. 126.

educational institutions.<sup>1</sup> In Colombia many such schools on the primary and secondary level were established.

With the current resurgence of Catholicism has come a campaign against these schools. Since they are often more progressive and liberal in their views, people from the higher social levels have chosen to send their children to Protestant schools. The Church has attempted to counteract this by threatening excommunication to "parents who dare to send children to the mission schools."<sup>2</sup>

During the Roman Catholic Holy Year of 1950 on numerous occasions the Protestants of Girardot, and all Catholics who sent their children to the "Colegio Americano" were excommunicated TO THE FOURTH GENERATION!<sup>3</sup>

This is perhaps an extreme case, but is somewhat indicative of the attitude of the Church.

In this connection it is interesting to note that in spite of the threat of excommunication which "has been nailed to the door of every Roman Catholic church in the land,"<sup>4</sup> many Catholic parents continue to send their children to Protestant schools. One father explained, "'You see . . . we pay our priest good penance money to buy up the privilege of continuing to send Maria to the mission school.'<sup>5</sup>

#### b. Efforts to Close Protestant Schools.

The activity of the Roman Church has gone considerably farther than this type of discrimination, however. It is apparently their plan to have all of the Protestant schools closed.

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1. Cf. Dunne: A Padre Views South America, p. 275.
2. E. M. Lee, op. cit., p. 187.
3. "City of Acacia Trees," Colombian Clippings, Summer 1952, p. 2.
4. Lee, loc. cit.
5. Ibid.



With the Ministry of Education in the hands of the Catholics, it is not too difficult for them to close Protestant schools at will. An editorial in the Conservative newspaper, El Siglo, of Sunday, October 19, 1952, told of the closing of nine more Protestant schools.

The editorial congratulates the Ministry for this work of "social hygiene," and asks that the measure be extended to all parts of the country. The article goes on to say that according to the Constitution the only right enjoyed by the Protestants is that of worshipping in their churches, and concludes, therefore, that they have no right to found schools, where they "preach subversion, eulogize adultery, discredit the homeland, and ridicule Catholic institutions."<sup>1</sup>

With such false charges leveled against them, schools are continually being closed.

A recent example of such action is the closing of the Protestant school of the Latin American Mission in Sincelejo, Bolivar. The school was inspected in September of 1952 by Sr. Aníbal Gándara Campo, General Inspector of the Department, and Sr. Antonio Romero, Sectional Inspector. Everything was found to be in good order except that the children did not attend mass and the Catholic religion was not taught, neither of which are required by law. On October 1, 1952, Sr. Luis Tenorio, the mayor of the town, entered the school with a policeman and ordered the school closed on the authority of a resolution from the Departmental Inspector. The children were ordered to go home immediately in spite of the protests of the teacher, Srta. Carmen Tirado. As the mayor left he said, "The government is taking measures to bring all this to an end, because you do not give religious instruction nor do you believe in the saints or in one God."

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1. Evangelical Confederation of Colombia: Report on Religious Persecution in Colombia, S. A., Bulletin No. 6, p. 10.

Upon inquiry it was discovered that the resolution had not been approved by the Director of Public Education of the Department, but after a second examination of the school, it was stated that the facilities were inadequate. In a further interview with the Director of Public Education a delegation from the Latin American Mission was informed that

regardless of the fact that the parents of the students were Protestant, the Catholic religion must be taught there since the Concordat stated that because Colombia was Catholic by a vast majority, the Catholic religion must be taught in all schools. He added that the school could be reopened only under the condition that the Catholic religion be taught and the children taken to mass.<sup>1</sup>

Such incidents could be multiplied many times, until today, for the most part, only the larger schools in the larger cities remain open.<sup>2</sup>

The fact that the question of religious instruction and attendance at mass is usually the basis for such action indicates the role of the church in this matter, but there is even more direct evidence that the Church is involved. On February 4, 1952, Dr. José Arévalo, the mayor of Puerto Tejada, Cauca, ordered two small Evangelical, primary, day schools to be closed. He said that he had done it on orders of "superiors." The policeman who was sent to enforce the order said, however, that it was Father Carlos Muñoz, the local priest who had given the order. It is interesting to note in this connection that the schools had been closed in November of 1950 by the former mayor on orders from Papayán, the capital of the department, or at least so he said. However, two months later after a dispute with Father Muñoz, the mayor permitted

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1. Ibid.

2. Gillam, loc. cit.

the reopening of the schools saying that "he had never had orders from Papayán to close them, but that he had done so to please the priest."<sup>1</sup>

In the light of literacy conditions and the government's apparent desire to deal with the problem, it is difficult to explain the closing of so many schools. For example, in the Department of Córdoba, of the 91,212 children living there, only 14,299 are studying in an educational institution. In the city of Bucaramanga, it is estimated that 50 per cent of the children cannot read, and only 4 per cent of the total population is able to read and write with any degree of facility.<sup>2</sup> This certainly indicates the significant role played by the church in this matter, when failure to teach the Catholic religion is sufficient reason to close schools and so deprive children of educational opportunities.

A further factor in this situation developed with the presentation to the Colombian Congress of a project to nationalize primary education. This measure, introduced by Dr. Daniel Góngora, would mean that the government would finance and have exclusive control in administering all the primary education of the country. This would automatically close all Protestant schools or at least mean that they would pass over to government control. Because of the present tie-up between the Church and the state, it would also mean that all of the children in the primary schools would be obligated to attend mass, to study the Catholic religion, and to receive first communion when of age, in order to learn to read and write. What the future of this project will be remains to be seen, but it is a dark cloud on the horizon for Protestant schools.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Evangelical Confederation of Colombia: Report of Recent Persecution of Evangelicals in Colombia, S. A., Bulletin No. 1, p. 14.
2. Evangelical Confederation of Colombia: Report on Religious Persecution in Colombia, S. A., Bulletin No. 6, p. 10.
3. Ibid.

### C. Politics and Government

"In Colombia, from the independence period to the present day, the church has been tenacious in its hold upon political power."<sup>1</sup> In a country so thoroughly Catholic one would expect considerable interplay between the Church and the state, if for no other reason, by virtue of the fact that the men in positions of authority would be Catholics. Because of their philosophy of politics and government, however, they have gone much further than this indirect influence. The problems arise from the manner in which the Church has wielded this control for its own ends.

#### 1. The Present Political Picture.

##### a. The Two political Parties.

The two political parties in Colombia, the Conservative and the Liberal, can be distinguished by the fact that the Conservative Party generally favors union of Church and state while the Liberal Party opposes union of Church and state. The Conservative Party consequently has the backing of the Church, or perhaps one could say that the Church has the backing of the Conservative Party. This party numbers among its members those who are loyally submissive to the Roman Church. The Liberal Party, on the other hand, is composed of the more liberal element in the Church along with the anticlericals and those who have become practical atheists. For the most part, members of the Liberal Party are still Roman Catholics, and hence, the conflict is not between Catholic and non-Catholic, between Catholic and Communist, between Catholic and Protestant, but between Catholic and Catholic.

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1. Barclay: Greater Good Neighbor Policy, p. 67.

b. The Present Conservative Government.

As a result of the split in the Liberal majority in the elections of 1946, the Conservative Party again came into power for the first time since a similar split in their ranks led to a Liberal victory in 1930. The leader of this group who is now president of Colombia is Laureano Gomez who has been characterized as "ultra-conservative, anti-American, pro-Franco, and much hated by the Liberals."<sup>1</sup> A further description of him is given by a fellow-Colombian:

He is a demagogue who had practiced the art of opposition for thirty years of political life. He has attacked presidents, archbishops, institutions. He has defamed great men of Colombia's past, including Santander . . . He has brought about a schism in the Church. The last two archbishops have been victims of his attack, and with the support of the most belligerent sector of the clergy he has formed a fiercely militant church within the Christian Church. Having been educated in a Jesuit school, he is much closer to this order than to the rest of the church in a country that is 100% Catholic.<sup>2</sup>

Following the riots of 1948 a state of siege was proclaimed and a virtual dictatorship was established with Gomez at the helm. This brought at least a temporary cessation of the democracy that had existed in Colombia under the Liberal government.

As to the relation of this government to the Church, Gomez has said that

it should not be said that the present government is dictated to nor dominated by the Church. He contends that the Conservatives are fervent and loyal Catholics by their very character and defend the Church without any necessity of being commanded to do it by the ecclesiastical authorities. This is not hard to believe . . .<sup>3</sup>

From the description of this man by Arciniegas it appears that he outdoes even the hierarchy in his devotion to Rome, or perhaps it would be more

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1. America, November 26, 1949, p. 217.
2. Arciniegas, op. cit., pp. 62-63.
3. Gillam, op. cit., p. 3.

accurate to say his devotion to Spain, for it is Spanish Catholicism which he has taken as his model. In this connection he has said, "Colombia is a kind of super-Spain where the essence of Hispanism has been preserved stronger and purer than in the mother country."<sup>1</sup>

When Gomez took office one of his first acts was to order the preparation of a new constitution which he entrusted into the hands of a committee headed by Father Félix Restrepo, a Jesuit, and according to Arciniegas, there are reasons to believe that this new constitution will be Fascist in nature.<sup>2</sup>

Such a governmental set-up is much to the advantage of the Roman Church, and it is taking every advantage of the situation. It is true that many of the Catholics of Colombia and certainly of the United States do not agree with the extreme aggressiveness of men like Gomez, but there seems to be nothing to prohibit the more extreme elements in the Catholic Church from going as far as they desire to go in insuring the dominance of Catholicism in Colombia to the exclusion of any other church.

#### c. The Clash Between Conservatives and Liberals.

Since the riots of 1948 there has been a virtual civil war in Colombia between the two opposing political parties. Henry McCorkle says, "At least 30,000 people have been killed since April 9, 1948, in strictly political fighting."<sup>3</sup> Other estimates range from 15,000 to 50,000. As in Venezuela and Peru, the opposition party has been

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1. Schmid: "Sinners, Saints, and Civil War," American Mercury, September 1952, p. 24.
2. Arciniegas, op. cit., pp. 63, 362.
3. Henry L. McCorkle: "Crisis in Colombia," Presbyterian Life, May 24, 1952, p. 10.

practically outlawed, and in each of these cases the outlawed party constitutes the majority party in the country. "The spirit of resistance has had to go underground, but the members of these parties are more firmly united now than when they were able to demonstrate their strength in free elections."<sup>1</sup> This is the opinion of one who has been close to the situation for many years.

This political struggle is important for the problem at hand because it is often given as the reason for the persecution of Protestants. The Roman Church has certainly taken advantage of the situation as will be seen in the next section.

#### d. International Implications.

As has been noted, there is a close connection between Spain and the situation in Colombia. "Colombia is a traditionally Catholic country which has always looked more toward Catholic Europe than to the Anglo-Saxon world."<sup>2</sup> Today that link is probably stronger than it has been for many years. Gomez spent several years in Spain in the middle forties just before returning to take over the reins of government in Colombia, and there is reason to believe that Franco had an active share in the establishment of the dictatorship. "He has seen in the restoration of Hispanidad the opportunity to acquire international strength, and Latin American votes have been of invaluable aid to him in his horse-trading deals with the United Nations."<sup>3</sup>

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1. Arciniegas, op. cit., p. xiv.
2. Nevins, op. cit., p. 28.
3. Arciniegas, op. cit., p. 361.

Latin America has long been recognized by foreign powers as an ideal base from which to strike the United States. It was a part of Hitler's master plan which has been taken over by Russia.<sup>1</sup> While the present government appears to be strongly anti-communistic having gone so far as to expel the Russian Embassy in 1948, these European ties to a Fascist country do not make for good inter-American relations; and they could lead to the development of a real trouble spot in the Western hemisphere.

It thus becomes apparent that the political picture in Colombia is complicated; and these are by no means all of the factors involved, but they are some of the more significant ones. With the close ties between the Catholic Church and the present government, militant Catholicism can be expected to advance in this country.

## 2. Indirect Means of Exercising Political Control.

"The Roman Church is alive to all aspects of the question-- religiously, culturally and nationally--and uses every one of them to buttress its own position."<sup>2</sup> With the near identity of Church and state which now exists in Colombia, every avenue is utilized to maintain control. In the light of the fact that the majority of the population are still Liberals, the means used to achieve this end often are necessarily forceful and not always commendable.

### a. Press and Radio.

One of the means which has always been used by the Roman Church to maintain its hold on the people is to control their thinking,

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1. Ibid.

2. Northcott: Religious Liberty, p. 113.



and one of the chief means of achieving this end is to control what the people read and hear. The Index Librorum Prohibitorum was established by the Roman Church for this purpose. Today in Colombia more drastic measures are being taken to limit the reading of the faithful to that which the Church approves.

Bible reading among Catholics has never been consistently encouraged by the Roman Church, although today there is a movement in the Church toward that end. With the coming of Protestantism, however, the Bible came into the hands of the laity in unprecedented numbers causing the Roman Church great concern. Because of the freedom of religion granted by the constitution they were not allowed to prohibit the sale of Bibles on legal grounds, so they turned to other means. One such expedient was to keep Bibles out of the country by detaining them in customs. "One man who was running a Bible Society down there reported that ninety cases of Bibles remained in Customs for nine months, because the government would not release them."<sup>1</sup>

Numerous instances of intimidation of Bible colporteurs have been reported by the Evangelical Confederation of Colombia. They are often charged with selling communist literature, but the sale of Bibles continues to be brisk.<sup>2</sup>

It has been said that "journalists could rightly be called the midwives of independence in . . . Colombia,"<sup>3</sup> but today freedom of the press is a thing of the past.

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1. Clyde W. Taylor: "The Slaughter of Protestants in South America," The Missionary Worker, October 15, 1951, p. 3.
2. Cf. Evangelical Confederation of Colombia: Report on Religious Persecution in Colombia, Bulletin No. 6.
3. Arciniegas, op. cit., p. 378.

In August (1952), a report issued by the Inter-American Press Association states that "there is no more arbitrary and politically capricious censorship exercised anywhere in the Western Hemisphere today" than in Colombia . . . In September, the Venezuelan Roman Catholic Journal, La Religion, commented, "Only in a country where no freedom exists and where the main government preoccupation is to destroy freedom of thought is it possible to see such a case of newspaper persecution."<sup>1</sup>

In September of 1952 the office of El Tiempo, the Liberal journal, was mobbed, sacked, and burned along with the office of another newspaper, the homes of the two leaders of the opposition party, and the national headquarters of that party in Bogotá. It is worthy of note at this point that El Tiempo, "despite suffocating censorship, had a nation-wide circulation of more than twice that of the semi-official government paper, El Siglo."<sup>2</sup>

Such censorship is not limited to Colombian publications.

Time, Life, and several other magazines published in the United States, and the magazine Bohemia, of Havana, have been banned from circulation in . . . Colombia . . . The New York Times has been repeatedly confiscated by the postal authorities in Colombia.<sup>3</sup>

Arciniegas states further:

The inescapable fact is that truth has become an article of contraband. Matters that are of public domain in the rest of the world become known to many Latin Americans only when they go to New York. A substantial portion of the wire copy purchased by Latin American newspapers winds up in the censor's wastebasket.<sup>4</sup>

On the local level newspaper editors are ordered by the priests not to accept Protestant advertising or to write up Protestant activities, and in the city of Girardot where the newspaper men chose to give freedom of the press to the Protestants, they have been excommunicated for it.<sup>5</sup>

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1. "U.N. Action Demanded on Colombian Situation," Presbyterian Life, November 15, 1952, p. 15.
2. Ibid.
3. Arciniegas, op. cit., p. 11.
4. Ibid., p. 12.
5. "The Presbyterian Church of Girardot," Colombian Clippings, Summer, 1952, p. 14.

A similar situation exists in regard to radio broadcasting. In March of 1952 the Ministry of Correos and Telegrafos ordered all programs of Evangelicals suspended. No reasons were given, and the order was for an indefinite period of time. The original order applied only to Bogotá, but the chief censor, Sr. Guillermo Parda Currea, said that it might well apply to the whole country.<sup>1</sup>

As in other cases, this is in violation of the freedom guaranteed by the constitution, and the primary means of enforcing such orders are ecclesiastical. In the city of Girardot, as in the case of the newspaper, the local radio station has consistently accepted Protestant programs. The Church unleashed a bitter attack against the station and its manager, and finally the Catholics withdrew all of their broadcasts in an attempt to force the station to take the Protestants off the air. When the station manager stood by his position, he was excommunicated, and further official campaigns were waged against the station.<sup>2</sup> This is one of the rare instances when the pressure from the priest was not successful in accomplishing its desired end. More often, the Church is able to use this type of control effectively to impose its will in areas where it does not have direct jurisdiction.

b. Catholic Labor Unions.

The labor union movement in Colombia is still quite young having had its beginnings in 1935. In that year the National Federation known as The Confederation of Colombian Workers (C. T. C.) was organized.

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1. Colombian Clippings, Spring, 1952, p. 4.
2. Colombian Clippings, Summer, 1952, p. 14.

According to the constitution there was to be only one federation, and this original group was formed on a democratic basis to foster good trade unionism. "But in 1936 the Catholic Trade Unions were begun by the Hierarchy with the plan that one day they would control the Labor Movement."<sup>1</sup> This union is called The Union of Colombian Workers (U. T. C.). There is a third trade union group in the country as well, which is part of a larger group which feels that Latin America's economic problems cannot be solved on a national basis. The latter group is called The Confederation of Workers of Latin America (C. T. A. L.). Until the revolution of 1948 the C. T. C. was the only accredited union in Colombia, however.

When the state of siege was declared following the Bogotá riots, the president set aside the articles of the Constitution which authorized only one federation of labor making it permissible to have more than one. "Immediately after this decree was announced the U. T. C. was recognized and not long after that the C. T. C. was suspended 'because it was Communist controlled.'<sup>2</sup> In May of 1950 the C. T. C. purged its ranks of all communists and again applied for recognition by the government. It seems apparent that the government and the hierarchy are bent on strengthening the U. T. C. and at the same time doing everything possible to discredit the C. T. C. An example of the means used to accomplish this end is that the C. T. C. is not allowed to hold meetings nor to publish any materials. The U. T. C., on the other hand, has no difficulty in receiving such permission.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Henry D. Jones: Letters, p. 8.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

Both of these unions are affiliated with the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (I. C. F. T. U.). Mr. Henry D. Jones, an expert in the labor field, had this to say following a survey of the situation in Colombia:

It is my conviction from the many people whom I have interviewed that the UTC is a completely "confessional" union and is thereby unqualified to be a member of the I.C.F.T.U. while the CTC is a democratic and free trade union which should be recognized.<sup>1</sup>

In spite of this fact, the Catholic union is doing everything within its power to gain the leading position in representing Colombia at the meetings of the I. C. F. T. U. Because of the severe restrictions placed upon the C. T. C., they encountered difficulty in even raising the funds to send a representative to the meeting of the Confederation, while the U. T. C. had no such difficulties, having the funds of the government and the Church to back them.<sup>2</sup>

In this manner the Roman Catholic Church is taking advantage of its present favorable position in relation to the government to extend its control over this area of the life of the people. It should be remembered, however, that as yet the labor union movement in Colombia is not too extensive. Accurate figures are almost impossible to obtain, but the estimate of one "well-informed" man is about 450,000 for all three unions. In the light of the fact that there are approximately 4,000,000 persons in the laboring classes of Colombia, this is a relatively small figure.<sup>3</sup>

The Catholic labor movement in Colombia is headed by a Jesuit, Padre Vicente Andrade, and it is considered to be one of the two strongest

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1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., p. 9.

Catholic labor movements in Latin America.<sup>1</sup> It is a part of a larger social program launched by the bishops in 1945 under the title of La Coordinacion de Accion Social.<sup>2</sup> Although the present numbers involved are relatively small, the current program of the Roman Church in this area leaves no doubt that it will continue to build on the foundations which have been laid until the labor movement is safely in its control.

It has been said that "in general, Roman Catholic 'social work' and labor interests always tend to be only a tool for political domination."<sup>3</sup> There is perhaps on the surface a sincere attempt to practice the social doctrines of Pope Leo XIII, but from the evidence, politics seem to play a leading role in the labor movement.

While this activity on the part of the Church cannot be said to be the direct result of the presence of Protestantism, there is a sense in which it is a part of the total program which was thus stimulated. Protestantism has helped to develop a social consciousness which in turn has led to such things as the labor movement. This has tended to undercut the strictly ecclesiastical basis upon which Catholicism had been built in this part of the world and has forced the Church to become active in other areas such as the one just discussed.

#### c. Social Service Activities.

What has been said regarding the labor movement can also be said of the social program of the Catholic Church, but in this area the direct influence of Protestantism is more evident. It can be said of

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1. Considine, op. cit., p. 175.

2. Ibid.

3. Baez-Camargo: "A Roman Catholic Revival in Latin America," Presbyterian Survey, January, 1952, p. 6.

the Catholic Church, at least in general, that "its social service activity is strongest wherever Protestant schools, clinics, or dispensaries have been established."<sup>1</sup> As was the case in regard to the establishment of schools,<sup>2</sup> Catholic social agencies seem to spring up wherever a Protestant work is begun.

Of course its intentions are not primarily those of multiplying benefits for the people, although the people do profit by such competition, which though not a splendid virtue, sometimes brings forth unexpected fruits.<sup>3</sup>

An indication of the lack of the Church along this line is the fact that as late as 1952 the Latin American bishops were "concerned that in many areas the only technical training for nurses can be found in Protestant hospitals . . ."<sup>4</sup> The Church has had a highly organized system of religious penetration into the hospitals through the ministry of the nuns, but this ministry is perhaps more religious than social.

In 1948 the Colombian Catholic hierarchy inaugurated a "new and vigorous" social crusade. According to the National Catholic Welfare Conference, the following three points were stressed:

1. Pastors and Catholic colleges are urged to start Catholic Action programs immediately, or to stimulate them if they already exist . . . "The clergy amongst us is insufficient for the task."
2. The Institute of Social Studies for the Clergy at the Pontifical Javerian University was established "to prepare properly priests in order to encourage and counsel social action through the study of the church, social legislation, trade-unionism and co-operativism, social service, atheistic communism in its doctrine and methods."
3. Catholic colleges are reminded of their "duty to co-operate with the hierarchy in the solution of educational and social problems, and to this end are asked to operate evening and Sunday schools for workers and their children."<sup>5</sup>

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1. Gillam, op. cit., p. 2.
2. Ante, p. 32.
3. Barbieri, op. cit., p. 126.
4. "Building With Latin America's Bishops," The Catholic Digest, August, 1952, reprint, p. 4.
5. "Catholic Social Crusade," Commonweal, October 1, 1948, p. 598.

From this it is evident that the current social program of the Roman Church is at least theoretically a very broad one. As with the other areas of its program, the social movement is still in the early stages of development and its future is unpredictable. Behind it there seems to be a number of factors. The primary reason given by the Church itself would probably be that it is an attempt to conform to the papal encyclicals which deal with this subject. Another important consideration is the presence of communistic propaganda and activity in the country. And as has been noted already, Protestantism has also figured significantly as a stimulus in this matter. It is sometimes difficult to draw a distinct line between the last two factors as they are mentioned in Catholic writings because the Protestants are regularly called Communists in Colombia.<sup>1</sup> The communist influence should not be minimized, however.

One aspect of this program which is currently prominent is the work among the farmers and the peons. This is especially significant in the light of the fact that for centuries the Church was the wealthiest landowner in Latin America, and during that time the "tenants and peons were kept in utter ignorance, submission, and poverty."<sup>2</sup> Now that secular movements have entered this field and have organized these masses of the population, often under radical leaders, into at least potential sources of political and social power, "the Church suddenly has become interested in their welfare and in putting them under her wing."<sup>3</sup>

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1. Cf. W. S. Rycroft: The Menace of Political Catholicism, p. 3.
2. Baez-Camargo: "A Roman Catholic Revival in Latin America," Presbyterian Survey, January, 1952, p. 6.
3. Ibid.



In January of 1953 this phase of the program came in for special publicity when Monsignor Luigi G. Ligutti, executive director of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference, went to Colombia to conduct the first Latin American Congress on Rural Life Problems. According to Monsignor Ligutti,

the Congress will include representatives from all Latin American countries and will have as its principal aim the improvement of social, religious, and economic conditions in rural regions, where seventy per cent of the people live.<sup>1</sup>

A further aim of the Congress was "to put into practice the program defined and established at the International Catholic Congress on Rural Life held last year in Castel Gandolfo, Italy, the Pope's summer residence."<sup>2</sup>

The results of this Congress can not yet be determined, but what may be one of its significant developments is the suggestion from Monsignor Ligutti regarding the persecutions in Colombia which will be considered in the next section.<sup>3</sup>

#### D. Persecution

In commenting on the present conditions in Latin America, German Arciniegas says,

Comparing the text of the resolutions<sup>4</sup> with reality, one comes to the inescapable conclusion that rarely has history afforded an instance of more blatant cynicism. As a result there has been a loss

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1. "Eyes of the World," Converted Catholic Magazine, December, 1952, p.320.
2. Ibid.
3. Post, p. 62.
4. The American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man: Approved by the Ninth Conference of American States convened in Bogotá, March 30 to May 2, 1948.

of faith in international accords, in official pronouncements. And when authority loses its moral authority, violence steps in to take its place.<sup>1</sup>

The truth of this statement is verified by a look at Colombia today. Violence has indeed stepped in to play a leading role. Not only has the government resorted to violence to maintain control, the Church, in some measure at least, has adopted similar means also. Persecution in one form or another has come to be the expected thing for Protestants.

#### 1. The Fundamental Issue.

In a word the fundamental issue involved in the problem of persecution is religious liberty. How is the Colombian Constitution to be interpreted? Article 53 states:

The State guarantees freedom of conscience. No one shall be molested because of his religious opinions, or obliged to profess any creeds, or to observe any practices which are contrary to his conscience. Liberty of worship is guaranteed where it is not contrary to Christian morals or the law.<sup>2</sup>

The Evangelicals have taken this at face value, but the Roman Church and Conservative government have sought to interpret it in the light of the Concordat with the Vatican and in keeping with their own views on religious liberty. The Evangelicals have gone about their ministries in the usual manner, but they suddenly discovered that they were under attack by both the Church and the State for doing so. Monsignor Miquel Angel Builes, Bishop of Santa Rosa de Osos, in a pastoral letter places this judgment on Protestant activity:

Protestantism in Colombia and in all of Latin America is nothing more than a "fifth-column" which looks forward to the economic conquest

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1. Arciniegas, op. cit., p. 374.

2. Quoted in Rycroft: Persecution of Protestantism in Colombia, p. 2.

and absorption which it hopes to accomplish through its Protestant propaganda, causing us to abandon our Catholicism . . .<sup>1</sup>

On the basis of this he comes to this conclusion:

The Protestant propaganda is a challenge to a religious war, a challenge which we accept with all of its consequences. It is a judicial principle that it is lawful to repel force with force . . . it corresponds to us to reject the aggression, and reject it we will.<sup>2</sup>

It is abundantly clear that religious liberty does not exist today in Colombia although it is provided for in the present Constitution. The regime which now rules in this land knows only the Roman Catholic interpretation of the word "liberty," and as will be seen, the future is perhaps even darker for the Protestants in this regard.

The official attitude of the Catholic Church regarding religious liberty has been summed up by a French Catholic writer, Louis Veuillot, in these words: "When we are in a minority we are for religious liberty in the name of your [Protestant] principles. When we are in a majority, we refuse it in the name of ours."<sup>3</sup> This probably goes back to Augustine's dictum, "When error prevails it is right to invoke liberty of conscience, but when, on the contrary, truth predominates, it is proper to use coercion."<sup>4</sup> Macaulay in his Essays has re-stated this as:

I am in the right, and you are in the wrong. When you are the stronger, you ought to tolerate me, for it is your duty to tolerate truth. But when I am the stronger, I shall persecute you, for it is my duty to persecute error.<sup>5</sup>

. . . . .

1. Evangelical Confederation of Colombia: Report on Religious Persecution in Colombia, S. A., Bulletin No. 4, p. 22.
2. Ibid.
3. Quoted in Howard: Religious Liberty in Latin America, p. 18.
4. Northcott, op. cit., p. 105.
5. Quoted in ibid., p. 50.

This is the picture in Colombia today. The Roman Catholic Church is in power, and it is persecuting the Protestant minority which it holds to be in error.

## 2. The Situation as Reported by the Protestants.

Persecution from the Roman Church in Latin America is not a new thing, but in Colombia during the past five years there has been a sharp increase in such activity. In summing up the situation, W. Stanley Rycroft says:

The worst persecution of Protestants in recent years has taken place in Colombia. Whole congregations have had to flee to the hills and there continue their worship services. Pastors and members have been arrested, tortured, put in prison; some have been killed. Churches have been destroyed. Statements made by priests indicate that an attempt is being made to exterminate Protestantism in Colombia.<sup>1</sup>

The Evangelical Confederation of Colombia, representing seventeen Protestant groups in that country, has gathered documented reports of specific acts of persecution, and today has in its files information concerning more than seven hundred cases.<sup>2</sup> During the year of 1952 a series of bulletins was issued by the Confederation giving accounts of 170 incidents which took place during the period December 1, 1951, to December 31, 1952. The following break-down of these cases shows the nature of each case and the frequency with which it occurred.

### a. Individuals

1. Members of churches, pastors, colporteurs jailed (14, involving 40 persons)
2. Beaten, attacked or tortured (18)
3. Threatened or intimidated (22)
4. Refused Protestant burial (7)

. . . . .

1. Rycroft: The Menace of Political Catholicism, p. 3.
2. Rycroft: Persecution of Protestantism in Colombia, p. 3.

5. Intervention in Protestant weddings (4)
6. Protestant nurses lose jobs (2)
- b. Congregations or groups of Protestants
  1. Protestant service interrupted (11)
  2. Members intimidated, insulted (15)
  3. Religious services prohibited (10)
  4. Attacked as group (6)
- c. Church buildings
  1. Churches stoned (9)
  2. Churches burned or bombed (9)
- d. Homes of Protestants
  1. Homes burned (4)
  2. Homes searched or ransacked (6)
- e. Schools
  1. Closed (12)
  2. Children forced to attend mass (2)
- f. Personal property
  1. Bibles, hymn books, equipment, household effects - stolen, destroyed or confiscated (19)<sup>1</sup>

In the final bulletin for the year it is stated that these cases

constitute but 25% of the actual instances of mental and physical suffering inflicted, property and books confiscated or destroyed, manifestations of anti-Protestant sentiment taking the form of processions, stonings and the like, and discrimination in regards to use of schools, cemeteries, and hospitals. Such happenings are so commonplace that people fail to report them, whereas the more serious cases . . . are usually reported to CEDEC.<sup>2</sup> Only those cases were considered where the persecution was motivated by the fact that the victims were Protestants.<sup>3</sup>

Because of the involved political situation in Colombia and the virtual civil war that has been going on between the Conservatives and the Liberals, much of this persecution has been attributed to poli-

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1. Ibid.
2. Confederación Evangélica de Colombia, The Evangelical Confederation of Colombia.
3. Evangelical Confederation of Colombia: Report on Religious Persecution in Colombia, S. A., Bulletin No. 7, p. 11.

tical causes, but "every effort has been made to separate between reports of persecution which had a truly religious base, and those which could reasonably be considered to be largely political."<sup>1</sup> It is significant that "priests were involved in about one-third of the cases and the police involved in more than half of them."<sup>2</sup>

Regarding the role played by the Catholic priests in this picture of persecution, one observer has the following to say:

Of one thing I am convinced: most of the present persecution and anti-Protestant feeling is being imposed on the people by the clergy. The man-on-the-street hears constant sermons against the evangelicals, reads articles about them in church and secular publications, is led to pray that the heretics may leave, studies their "disgraceful" history in school, sees repeated lists of Catholic doctrines in which Protestants do not believe. The surprising thing is that the people don't feel more antagonism toward the evangelicals, in the face of all the "hate Propaganda" they meet day by day!<sup>3</sup>

In order to give an idea of the nature of some of the cases of persecution, the following headings from the final bulletin for 1952 are given:

1. ARMED CIVILIANS DYNAMITE PRESBYTERIAN CHAPEL. STACK BENCHES AND WINDOWS IN THE CENTER OF CHAPEL AND BURN THEM.
2. PRIEST, MAYOR, AND POLICE AGENT VISIT PROTESTANT SCHOOL FOUNDED TWENTY YEARS AGO. PRIEST MAKES INSULTING REMARKS AND SAYS SCHOOL MUST BE CLOSED.
3. PRIEST AND SECRETARY TO MAYOR HEAD RAGING MOB, PROHIBIT WORSHIP SERVICE, AND THREATEN LIFE OF NORTH AMERICAN MISSIONARY.
4. AUTHORITIES EXPEL FOUR PROTESTANT GIRLS FROM HIGH SCHOOL BECAUSE THEY WOULD NOT KNEEL IN MASS.

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1. "Colombia Mission History--1952", Colombian Clippings, Christmas 1952, p. 3.
2. "Evangelicals Maintain Vigilance in Colombia," Latin American News Letter, February, 1952.
3. Elisabeth Fletcher: "Colombia Today," Latin American Evangelist, September-October, 1952.

5. PARISH PRIEST, MAYOR, AND POLICE LEAD ATTACK AGAINST 60 WORSHIPERS, FIRING AT BUILDING IN WHICH THEY ARE MEETING. FORCE WAY INTO BUILDING, AND PRIEST WITH REVOLVER IN HAND THREATENS OWNER. ATTACKERS SEARCH BANANA GROVE FOR TWO PROTESTANT PASTORS WITHOUT SUCCESS. MAYOR REFUSES TO RETURN BOOKS AND PAPERS CONFISCATED BY PRIEST.

8. POLICEMAN ENTERS PROTESTANT'S HOME, CONFISCATES BOOKS, AND TAKING YOUNG PEOPLE CONGREGATED THERE TO CATHOLIC CHURCH, FORCE THEM TO KNEEL AND RECITE PRAYERS FOR FIVE HOURS. DETAINED AND THREATENED 24 HOURS.

9. STONE THROWN AT MISSIONARY HITS SMALL GIRL IN THE HEAD. COLOMBIANS REPORTING THE INCIDENT TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES ARE FINED AND JAILED.

10. GOVERNOR OF DEPARTMENT OF MAGDALEN UPHOLDS DECREE OF MAYOR AND PRIEST OF EL BANCO PROHIBITING UNDER PENALTY OF HEAVY FINE THE PROTESTANT WORSHIP SERVICE HELD IN HOME OF CANADIAN CITIZEN.

20. AUTHORITIES CONFISCATE BIBLES OF PRISONERS.<sup>1</sup>

The persecution has affected the churches in the smaller towns and villages more than it has the churches in the larger population centers. Many formerly flourishing Protestant churches have been forced to close entirely, and their members have taken refuge in the large cities. In many cases they have had to leave almost all of their belongings behind in their flight which has caused untold suffering and hardship for them.<sup>2</sup>

It is impossible to give a full account of the persecutions here, but suffice it to say that if the picture presented by the Protestant community in Colombia is a true one, an evangelical Christian must live in constant danger and uncertainty.

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1. Evangelical Confederation of Colombia: Report on Religious Persecution in Colombia, S. A., Bulletin No. 7.
2. Cf. "Ibague--1942-1952," Colombian Clippings, Christmas, 1952, p. 10.

3. The Situation as Reported and Explained by the Roman Catholics.

The reports of this persecution have been carried by the secular press in this country and have caused considerable reaction within Roman Catholic circles. Various explanations have been offered ranging from complete denial to admission and condemnation of the situation. The latter position is quite rare, however.

a. The Conservative View.

"The Catholic press . . . and the Vatican mouthpiece, OSSERVATORE ROMANO, have consistently denied the validity of the reports made by the Evangelical Confederation."<sup>1</sup> An example of this is found in the following quotation from an article in the Roman Catholic magazine, The Sign:

The Protestant attack reached a new low in lies and vituperation with the publications of a long article on Colombia in the Presbyterian Life for May . . . The charges are too ridiculous even to be taken seriously.<sup>2</sup>

In the same article this statement is also made:

No one can deny that specific cases of attacks on Protestants have occurred. However, it must be borne in mind that these acts were perpetrated by fanatical individuals and not by the Catholic Church or the Colombian Government, as the Protestants would have one believe.<sup>3</sup>

The stoning of churches and attacks on homes of Protestants are commonly attributed to groups of fanatical laymen or to crowds of boys. The leadership of priests in such incidents is flatly denied. One writer says, "There is no authentic evidence that a Catholic priest ever led a mob in stoning a Protestant church."<sup>4</sup>

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1. Rycroft: Persecution of Protestantism in Colombia, p. 2.
2. Nevins, op. cit., p. 31.
3. Ibid., p. 30.
4. Ibid., p. 31.



Another cause given for the persecutions is the political struggle between the two major parties. The American Jesuit organ, America, has the following to say concerning this:

Some of these Protestants have probably suffered acts of unreasoning persecution at the hands of individuals because they are Protestants. But they are suffering much more as liberals, because of the regrettable, hard-to-control present political strife in the country.<sup>1</sup>

The conservative press and clergy in Colombia are much more bold in their denials than are the North Americans. Some of the more rabid members of the clergy make no excuses for calling for the exclusion of Protestants from the country.<sup>2</sup> It is perhaps significant that during the past year the Pope demonstrated his approval of the activities of "the Protestant-hating Bishop of Santa Rosa de Osos, Monsignor Miguel Angel Builes," by conferring upon him the titles and honors of an "Obispo asistente al Solio Pontificio," which is the dignity immediately inferior to that of Cardinal.<sup>3</sup> The Archbishop of Bogotá and Primate of Colombia, Monsignor Crisanto Luque, was appointed to the Sacred College of Cardinals, further indicating the papal approval of the Colombian Church. At the same time, Dr. Laureano Gomez, the President of Colombia, was "decorated by Pope Pius XII with the category of 'Gran Cruz' of the 'Orden Piana' for his exceptional service to the Pope and the Holy See."<sup>4</sup>

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1. "Persecution of Protestants in Colombia," America, April 29, 1950, p. 108.
2. Cf. Evangelical Confederation of Colombia: Report of Recent Persecution of Evangelicals in Colombia, S. A., Bulletin No. 1, pp. 17-19.
3. Evangelical Confederation of Colombia: Report on Religious Persecution in Colombia, S. A., Bulletin No. 7, p. 12.
4. Ibid.

b. The Liberal View.

There are a few exceptions to the usual Catholic denial of persecution on religious grounds at the instigation of the clergy. German Arciniegas, while denying that persecution is the official program of the Catholic Church, states, "The fanatical members of the clergy, encouraged by a truly diabolical reactionary government, are sowing God only knows what seeds of wrath in the hearts of the humble."<sup>1</sup> In another place he speaks of village priests and even some in the cities "who make a machine gun of their pulpit."<sup>2</sup>

The liberal American periodical, Commonweal, speaking editorially, states:

We must further admit that no matter what the provocation (and undoubtedly the case is not clearly a black and white one) no excuse can be given for violent mob action against religious minorities. . . . When a group of fanatics, Catholic or otherwise, resorts to force or violence, it must be condemned.<sup>3</sup>

In the preface to his book, A Catholic Speaks His Mind on America's Religious Conflict, Thomas Sugrue suggests that self-criticism vanished from the Roman Catholic Church at the time of the Protestant Reformation, and that today it is still absent to the detriment of the Catholic Church. "Criticism by Protestantism from without . . . made criticism from within too dangerous to tolerate."<sup>4</sup> This seems to be the attitude of most Catholics toward this problem of persecution. The editor of Commonweal, however, goes so far as to suggest that Catholics "might better attempt to reevaluate the problem of civil regimes (even

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1. Arciniegas, op. cit., p. 278.
2. Ibid., p. 376.
3. "Violence in Colombia," Commonweal, May 2, 1952, p. 85.
4. Thomas Sugrue: A Catholic Speaks His Mind on America's Religious Conflict, pp. 5-6.

so-called 'Catholic' ones) . . ."<sup>1</sup> Such a course of action seems very unlikely, however, in the light of the attitude taken by the present leadership in Colombia.

It is difficult to categorize the Catholic explanations and reactions because they vary so widely. There do seem to be two classes within the Roman Catholic clergy, however. One is the staunchly conservative group which is almost fanatically loyal to Rome and therefore anti-Protestant, and the other is the liberal wing which recognizes the principle of religious liberty to some degree at least. One needs to remember that there are two groups, and that not all Catholics are Protestant baiters.

#### 4. Proposed Solutions to This Problem.

##### a. Religious Liberty.

Among the various solutions proposed for this difficult problem is the obvious one of the granting of actual religious liberty to all groups in Colombia.

The Christian Century suggests that this liberty be based on the principles set forth by the Catholic Church in connection with the struggle for religious freedom in Yugoslavia. The principles are:

1. The faithful must be guaranteed freedom not only to frequent churches but also to manifest their faith. Nobody should be molested for these reasons or prevented from practicing his religion.
2. Catholic parents must have the right to have their children baptized and to have them educated in Catholic schools whose existence must be respected by the civil authorities.
3. Catholics must receive the right to have their own press.
4. Catholics must have the right also to found and contribute to associations of a religious, pious or charitable nature.

. . . . .

1. "Violence in Colombia," Commonweal, May 2, 1952, p. 85.

5. Catholics must be free to contribute toward maintaining their clergy and religion.
6. The faithful must be allowed to keep in touch with their bishops and clergy must suffer no impediment in preaching Christian doctrine and giving their flock religious assistance.
7. Catholic seminaries must be allowed and no obstacles thrown in the way of religious, charitable and teaching activities of religious congregations.<sup>1</sup>

If these principles could be applied to the Protestants in Colombia the problem would soon come to an end. Under the existing conditions in that country, such a course of action is hardly in the realm of possibility.

b. The Proposal of Dr. Jose Maria Chaves.

A Colombian Catholic layman, Dr. Jose Maria Chaves, became interested in the Catholic-Protestant problem in his country and submitted a plan for conciliation to both sides. Its conditions are:

Protestants are asked to limit their missionaries in Colombia to the present number or to a quota; to stop disseminating stories in the United States about persecution of Protestants so long as no new violence occurs; to confine their preaching to Protestant churches and institutions; and to refrain from attacks on Catholic dogmas and ministers. Catholic authorities, both civil and religious, are called upon to denounce publicly any anti-Protestant violence; to take legal steps against the perpetrators of such violence; and to guarantee freedom of worship for Protestants.<sup>2</sup>

This plan was reported to be under consideration by both sides, but it has thus far produced no significant action. In August of 1952 the Evangelical Confederation of Colombia in its General Assembly at Cali, issued a "Manifesto on Religious Liberty and Human Rights" which was their response to this proposal. After stating their position, the manifesto concludes with this resolution:

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1. "The Vatican Defines Religious Liberty," The Christian Century, February 4, 1953, p. 125.
2. "Causes of Violence," Commonweal, August 22, 1952, p. 476.

Therefore be it resolved: . . . 8. That the Evangelical Confederation of Colombia is willing to enter into conversations concerning the religious problem with representatives of the following: the National Government, the Commission on Human Rights of the United Nations, and the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>1</sup>

Copies of this manifesto were sent to the Minister of Government, Minister of Foreign Relations, the Archbishop of Colombia, the Papal Nuncio, and the national and international Press. "Censorship did not permit the manifesto to be published in Colombia, nor has the Government answered the manifesto although later letters of inquiry were sent regarding it."<sup>2</sup> It appears that this proposal will die for lack of action.

c. The Proposal of Monsignor Luigi G. Ligutti.

In connection with the Latin American Congress on Rural Life Problems held in January of 1953, there came another suggestion aimed at solving this problem from the director of the Congress, Monsignor Luigi G. Ligutti. He is reported to have proposed that

some impartial, private United States foundation appoint a three-man team of social scientists to go to Colombia with an adequate staff and there, after from three to six months of study on the ground, issue a non-partisan report.<sup>3</sup>

At the present writing it is too early to determine the fate of this proposal, but it is very doubtful whether the present reactionary Colombian government would go along with such a plan.

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1. Evangelical Confederation of Colombia: Manifesto on Religious Liberty and Human Rights, p. 3.
2. Evangelical Confederation of Colombia: Report on Religious Persecution in Colombia, S. A., Bulletin No. 7, p. 12.
3. "Monsignor Ligutti Proposes Inquiry on Colombia," Christian Century, February 18, 1953, pp. 181-2.

d. Roman Catholic Monopoly.

The general idea behind much of the Catholic action in Colombia seems to be that the best solution would be for the Protestants to leave, and it is reflected in the taunt-song, "We don't want Protestants. They have come to Colombia to corrupt us . . ."1 The appeal is continually made that "the only hope of union among Colombians is the Catholic religion. To promote religious division is an insane thing to do."2 This is the statement of the Jesuit priest, Eduardo Ospina. This is echoed by many of the governmental officials as indicated by the words of Sr. Helio Martínez Márquez, mayor of Armenia:

And it is true that the Catholic religion is the most powerful bond in our national unity. To try to undermine that unity is to plot against the State and to work for our national and social disintegration.<sup>3</sup>

The appeal is that since this is true, it is for the good of the country that Protestantism be outlawed.

It is interesting that a Jesuit, Peter M. Dunne, should be the one to point out the fallacy of this argument. He says:

I must confess that upon reflection I cannot see the force of this argument. History seems to contradict it. If Catholicism were the strong bond of union, then Greater Colombia would never have broken up, for each of the three sections, Colombia, Venezuela, and Ecuador, was Catholic; and we would have in Hispanic South America today only two or three great nations instead of nine smaller ones.<sup>4</sup>

He continues by pointing out the contrast between Catholic Spain and the divisions in the United States, and concludes that in history bonds other than religious have been the source of national unity. This

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1. Evangelical Confederation of Colombia: Report of Recent Persecution in Colombia, S. A., Bulletin No. 1, p. 18.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Dunne: A Padre Views South America, p. 274.

becomes more clear when one considers the fact that the struggle in Colombia between the Conservatives and the Liberals is a struggle between Catholics and not between Catholics and Protestants. Nevertheless, this argument is still used, and it carries weight with many unthinking people.

Many other factors are brought to bear on this question, but the Church is doing more than talk about it; it is taking definite steps toward an actual Roman Catholic monopoly. The Colombian hierarchy has sent a series of recommendations to the Commission on Constitutional Studies including the writing into the Constitution of the principle articles of the Concordat with the Vatican. If these are adopted, the present articles guaranteeing freedom of conscience and of education will be eliminated.

Steps have also been taken to keep new Protestant missionaries from entering the country. This is done both through governmental action and through propaganda.<sup>1</sup>

There is a real possibility that the Roman Catholic Church may gain this objective, and that Protestant missionaries will be excluded from Colombia, but it is doubtful whether it would offer a solution to the problem. The Colombian Protestant community is too deeply rooted in its faith to be written off because missionaries from other lands are forbidden. There would have to be a wholesale purge before Protestantism would cease to be a force in the life of the Colombian people. This, of course, would necessitate an intensifying of the present persecutions and would only enlarge the problem.

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1. Harold A. Bosley: Shall Protestant Missionaries Be Withdrawn From Latin America?

### E. Summary and Conclusion

The presence of Protestantism in Latin America has helped to develop a social consciousness which has tended to undercut the ecclesiastical form of Roman Catholicism. For this reason the Church has been forced to step up its activity in many areas which are non-ecclesiastical. This rise of social consciousness has, to some extent, caused the people to become anti-clerical, and therefore the Church has turned to other means of holding its control over the people. A vigorous educational program has developed to make sure that the Catholic religion is taught in all the schools. To this end Protestant schools have been closed whenever possible, especially if they refused to take the children to Mass. The modern methods of the Protestant schools have been a stimulus to the Catholic schools to improve, and wherever a Protestant school has been established, the Catholics have usually followed with one of their own.

At the present time the government of Colombia is in the hands of conservative Catholics who favor union of church and state. This government is opposed by a Liberal majority, and a state of virtual civil war has existed since the Bogotá riots of 1948. The Church has taken advantage of the extremely pro-Catholic government and the internal strife to further its campaign to restore Colombia to the control of Rome as it was before the period of Liberal rule from 1930 to 1946. Through control of the press and radio, the organization of Catholic labor unions, and increased social service activities, the Church has been able to exercise at least indirect control over the people.



The Roman Church has further taken advantage of the present situation in its attempts to rid the country of the Protestants. Open, physical persecution has been carried on in varying degrees during the past five years. Every attempt to deal effectively with this situation has so far met with failure, and the persecutions continue.

What percentage of this stepped-up activity on the part of the Catholic Church is traceable directly to the influence of Protestantism is difficult to say, but it can be safely stated that the Protestants have exercised an influence out of all proportion to their numbers.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### ECCLESIASTICAL ACTIVITIES OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

## CHAPTER THREE

### ECCLESIASTICAL ACTIVITIES OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

#### A. Introduction

"Latin America has been called Christianity's most ghastly failure."<sup>1</sup> After four centuries of a veneer of Christianity only about 10 per cent of the people actively practice any form of their faith, and 80 per cent of the people are still illiterate. The Roman Catholic Church seemed satisfied with such conditions during this period until a new form of Christianity entered this part of the world. The virility of the young Protestant Church stimulated the entrenched Roman Catholic Church to new activity not only in the political, educational, and social fields, but within the actual framework of the Church itself. It became increasingly apparent that its hold on the people was growing weaker and weaker. There was no mass movement to Protestantism, but large numbers of the people were leaving the Church. They may retain their membership, but by their lack of participation in any religious observances they became essentially non-Catholic. What was the Church to do about this? How was it to conduct its Church program so as to appeal to the people in this age of enlightenment? This chapter will be an attempt to answer these questions in terms of the ecclesiastical activities of the Roman Catholic Church as they are known today.

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1. Howard: "South America Dreams of Democracy," Latin American News Letter, November, 1952.

## B. Catholic Action

One important factor in the ecclesiastical activities of the Roman Church is the organization known as Catholic Action. This movement is not peculiar to Latin America, but it has been used effectively to achieve certain desired ends.

### 1. Its Aims and Organization.

Catholic Action was defined by Pope Pius XI as "the participation of the laity in the apostolate of the Church's hierarchy."<sup>1</sup> This definition was expanded by Monsignor Luigi Civardi to read:

The organization of the Catholic laity, consecrated to the apostolate in aid of, and in direct dependence on the hierarchy, in view of the triumph of the Kingdom of Christ in individuals, in the family, and in society at large.<sup>2</sup>

It was initiated by Pope Pius IX to meet the crisis of secularism. This movement toward secularism is said by the Catholics to have begun with the Protestant Reformation or "revolution" as it is called by them.<sup>3</sup> Today the movement has grown to such proportions that the clergy is unable to cope with the situation, and therefore, the laity has been organized as a vital force to meet the current crisis.

The supreme aim of Catholic Action is said to be "the Christianization of consciences."<sup>4</sup> The other aims which are but stages toward the supreme goal are stated as follows:

1. Co-operation with the Parish Priest in Parochial Religious Life . . .
2. The Intellectual Apostolate. This means the spreading of Christian

. . . . .

1. James J. O'Toole: What is Catholic Action? p. 9.
2. Ibid., p. 10.
3. Ibid., p. 14.
4. Ibid., p. 16.

ideas to people outside and beyond the confines of Catholic organizations . . .

3. The Christianization of the Family . . .

4. The Defense of the Rights and Liberty of the Church so that she has the position which Christ has assigned to her and thus may be able to make herself the mistress and guide of all other societies . . .

5. Co-operation in the Scholastic Field by helping the Church in the foundation and maintenance of her own schools and in the Christianization of all other schools.

6. The Promotion of the "good" Press . . . By the "good press we mean . . . one that positively spreads and defends Christian dogma and morals, hinders the effects of the bad press and educates in Christian spirituality . . .

7. The Moralization of Manners . . .

8. The Christian Solution of the Social Question . . .

9. The Christian Inspiration of all Civil Life . . .<sup>1</sup>

It is readily observed that these aims touch every area of life, and one priest has summed them up by saying, "The aim of Catholic Action is to make every action intensely Catholic."<sup>2</sup>

Catholic Action is more than just a movement within the Church. It is an official apostolate organized on the same basis as the Church itself. Its major divisions are national, diocesan, and parochial corresponding to Pope, Bishop, and parish priest. A further organizational division is aimed at bringing groups with common interests together. In Colombia, for example, there are civic, rural, and industrial Catholic Action groups. Each group then works with the problems in its own field of interest and with the non-Catholics in its social group.

The work of the laity is all under the direction and control of the hierarchy. The Catholic laymen, as such, have no jurisdiction in the Church, but today they are in many places the chief agents in the work of the Church. Priests and bishops act as advisors and sometimes as open leaders, but the spade work is being done by the laity.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Ibid., pp. 16-18.

2. Ibid., p. 19.

3. Cf. E. Boyd Barrett: Rome Stoops to Conquer, p. 16.

The Catholic Church considers Catholic Action as indispensable to the current well-being of the Church, and it was considered to be of such consequence by Pius XI that in the first ten years of his reign, his official and unofficial pronouncements on the subject filled about six hundred closely-printed pages. A Pax Romana commentator observes that

such unremitting and intense insistence on a single idea by the Papacy is something which is without parallel in the history of the Church. The closest approach to it is to be found in the preaching of the crusades.<sup>1</sup>

It is clear, then, that Catholic Action has the unqualified backing of the papacy, and that it can be counted on to be a significant force in the Catholic bid for power.

Catholic Action was officially organized for all of Colombia's eight million people in 1944, but it didn't begin to function at full strength over night. The central committee was printing only 100,000 copies of its news sheet at the end of that year.<sup>2</sup> It takes time to educate the laity to their part in the program, and the fact that so few are at all regular in their church attendance makes the expansion of this work more difficult. It has grown to sufficient proportions to become a significant force, however.

## 2. Its Functions.

Some indication of the functions of Catholic Action are given in the statement of the aims, but it will be well to point out some of the more significant ones.

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1. O'Toole, op. cit., p. 53.

2. Dunne: A Padre Views South America, p. 229.

a. As a Positive Spiritual Influence on the Laity.

According to a Roman Catholic writer on the subject, "The first task of Catholic Action is to intensify the religious life of its members."<sup>1</sup> The same writer says, "Anyone who thinks that modern man with his lack of spirituality and moral indifferentism is going to heal the sickness of society has gone wrong on his diagnosis of the disease."<sup>2</sup> In view of the conditions presented in Chapter I the Latin American Church has a large ministry in this area. Preaching has often been of an emotional, sentimental quality directed primarily to the women so that intelligent laymen have complained that the majority of the people are ignorant of the essential dogmas and theology of their faith.<sup>3</sup>

At the Second Inter-American Congress of Catholic Action held in Havana, Cuba, in February of 1949, a call went out to Catholic Action to devote itself to a program of spiritual direction and spiritual exercises.<sup>4</sup> At the same gathering plans were also discussed for reaching the professional and intellectual groups for the apostolate of Catholic Action. To this end the establishment of special centers and groups on university campuses was proposed.

This endeavor to revive the Church spiritually could be the beginning of a significant movement within the Roman Church. The difficulty is that too often the movement stops with loyalty to the Church, and individuals never really get to Christ.

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1. O'Toole, op. cit., p. 23.

2. Ibid.

3. Dunne: A Padre Views South America, pp. 267-8.

4. John F. Parr: "Hemispheric Catholic Action Meets at Havana," Catholic Action, March, 1949, p. 8.

b. As An Arm of Persecution.

One of the principles guiding Catholic Action is "universality of means." A Roman Catholic writer on the subject explains that

by this is meant that we propose to use every means . . . to attain our supreme goal which is to "restore all things in Christ." The end is spiritual, the activities we develop may be either spiritual or material--whatever is conducive to the end.<sup>1</sup>

The writer also says, "It need scarcely be added that our means must be pure, means approved by divine and human law."<sup>2</sup> In the Inquisition and the continuing activity of the Holy Office the Roman Catholic Church has demonstrated that forceful suppression of heresy, and especially Protestantism, has been an approved means to their stated end. This means is being employed in Colombia today, and there is some evidence that Catholic Action groups are being utilized in this activity.

In writing about Catholic Action in the United States, E.

Boyd Barrett observes:

There was a time--it is now past--when only pious Catholics took part in the work of the Church. But today many Catholics who cannot qualify as pious are busy about Catholic Action . . . Catholic Action would be a far less serious factor in this country were its only agents pious and devout Catholics.<sup>3</sup>

This statement is equally true of Colombia, for if only those who would qualify as devout Catholics participated in this program, its significance would be greatly diminished.

An editorial in El Pueblo, a leading Church organ in Argentina, indicates the principles on which Catholic Action is to operate throughout Latin America. It states:

. . . . .

1. O'Toole, op. cit., p. 39.
2. Ibid.
3. Barrett, op. cit., p. 16.



Our traditional religious unity must be the basis of true national unity. This compels us openly to combat the enemies of this unity. Protestantism, with its skillful, consistent, systematic penetration, is the first enemy of our Roman Catholic ancestral unity. There should be no ill-advised tolerance. We cannot be tolerant toward those whose aim is to break our religious unity and to divide us.<sup>1</sup>

With this anti-Protestant spirit constantly before the people, they are ready to participate in the persecution activities.

Another factor which has entered into the psychology behind Catholic Action is group action. Banding the faithful together in an organized unit makes for strength not found in individual action. As it is expressed by Father O'Toole:

It will be a great antidote to the curse of individualism and egosim, that has dogged the footsteps of modern times. It will cure the timidity that has characterized so many Catholics, a timidity deeply lamented by Pius XI. In its place will flourish a new courage, a fighting spirit . . .<sup>2</sup>

This "fighting spirit" has expressed itself in many ways, but perhaps the outstanding one in Colombia is found in the anti-Protestant campaign.

#### c. Other Functions of Catholic Action.

The fact that Catholic Action is associated with the social program of the Church has already been suggested in the principles on which the current social crusade is based.<sup>3</sup> The first point of that program is to encourage the establishment of Catholic Action groups wherever they do not now exist.

These groups, once formed, are utilized in a number of ways. In some centers women give instruction to the young.<sup>4</sup> Other groups assist

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1. Howard: Religious Liberty in Latin America? p. 48.

2. O'Toole, op. cit., p. 48.

3. Ante, p. 48.

4. Dunne: A Padre Views South America, p. 135.

in operating clinics and child care centers, while others help in conducting evening schools for workers and their families. Because of the general disinterest in the Church on the part of the male population,<sup>1</sup> this type of work is carried on primarily by groups of women.

Part of the program of Catholic Action is directed toward reviving the interest of the men in the Church. There seem to be several motives behind this. The first is the obvious one of the belief that the men need the Church; and the second is the converse of the first, the Church needs the men. Another motive for appealing especially to the men is the extensive shortage of clergy. The Catholic Action Congress which met in Havana in 1949 asked that the Catholic Action of Latin America "devote itself . . . a series of campaigns towards obtaining more vocations."<sup>2</sup>

There is practically no area of life in which this organized lay apostolate does not operate or at least plan to operate eventually. For this reason Catholic Action must be given due consideration in the current program of the Roman Catholic Church.

### C. Missionary Work of the Catholic Church

#### 1. The Need For Missionary Work.

It is something of a paradox that a land that has been solidly Roman Catholic for nearly four centuries should now be looking to a land that is still predominantly non-Catholic for missionaries, but that is the situation which exists today between Latin America and the United

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1. Ante, p. 6.
2. Parr, loc. cit.

States. While Latin America has 33 per cent of the world's Catholics, it has only 7 per cent of the world's priests, or an average of one to every seven thousand of the faithful. This is in contrast to one to every 622 in the United States and one to 479 in Canada. It is estimated that less than 10 per cent of the urban population and less than 5 per cent of the rural population in Latin America attend mass.<sup>1</sup> One South American bishop is quoted as saying, "I believe we can say that as many as fifty million Catholics in Latin America are living what is tantamount to a priestless religious life."<sup>2</sup>

The proportion of priests to people in Colombia is one of the best among the Latin American nations, but even here the ratio is one to 3535 according to figures in the Anuario de la Iglesia Catolica en Colombia<sup>3</sup> for 1951. Father Considine says in his book, Call for Forty Thousand, "Not a single country of the Latin American world can pretend to a satisfactory record."<sup>4</sup>

This situation did not become a serious problem to the Church until Protestant missionaries began ministering to these neglected masses, and it has probably been this stimulus of Protestant activity more than any other one thing that has caused the cry to be raised for more Catholic missionaries.<sup>5</sup> Even in the department of Antioquia, which has been called "the Ireland of Colombia," the Catholics are disturbed over the

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1. Patrick Crosse: "Drift of Church in Latin America Worries Jesuits," Inverness-Victoria County Bulletin, Cape Breton, April 16, 1952, reprint.
2. Considine: Call for Forty Thousand, p. 11.
3. Yearbook of the Catholic Church in Colombia.
4. Considine: Call for Forty Thousand, p. 10.
5. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 175, and Dunne: A Padre Views South America, p. 275.

activity of Protestants in areas "where there are no priests and police inspectors to protect the faith of the people."<sup>1</sup>

The Roman Church in Colombia is attempting to meet this alarming shortage of clergy by recruiting young men for the priesthood from its own people, but the need for missionaries from outside Latin America still is great.

## 2. The Extent of Missionary Work.

There has been a marked increase in the number of Roman Catholic missionaries in South America since 1940. In 1951 there were 1660 priests, brothers, and nuns from the United States serving in the lands to the South. This is 36 per cent of the total number of Catholic missionaries from this country serving on all mission fields.<sup>2</sup> Spain also provides a considerable number of priests for work in Latin America,<sup>3</sup> and very often the bishops will be from this group. Of the approximately 3000 priests in Latin America, it is estimated that at least 350 are Spanish, primarily from the Augustinian, Passionist, and Capuchin orders.<sup>4</sup>

This, however, is only a small beginning in comparison with what the Roman Church hopes to do in this line. As Considine has pointed out in his book, Call for Forty Thousand, the need must be measured in terms of tens of thousands of priests.<sup>5</sup> The call given by

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1. Evangelical Confederation of Colombia; Report on Religious Persecution in Colombia, S. A., Bulletin No. 6, p. 10.
2. "U. S. Missionaries Doubled in 11 Years," The Register, May 4, 1952, p. 1.
3. Paul Blanshard: American Freedom and Catholic Power, p. 279.
4. McCorkle: "Crisis in Colombia," Presbyterian Life, May 24, 1952, p. 9.
5. Considine, op. cit., p. 14.

Father Considine has been echoed again and again in Catholic circles in this country, and the response to the call may well determine the future of the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America. Father Dunne says that without adequate North American aid, "there is disaster written in the skies."<sup>1</sup>

There is a further complication to this picture as far as the Roman Church is concerned, however, for as Considine admits, "The countries of Latin America have no desire for large numbers of foreign priests. In particular, there is no desire for many thousands of priests from the United States."<sup>2</sup> These nations tend to resist any such invasion from the "Colossus of the North." In a land such as Colombia with its strong pro-Spanish leaning, the liberal tendencies of North American Catholics are not appreciated by the conservative clergy. On the other hand, the powerful anti-clerical element would oppose the entrance of large numbers of foreign priests into their land. Besides this, the rising tide of nationalism has caused the people to resent the patronizing attitude of the North Americans. In the light of these conditions, the future of the extensive missionary program proposed by the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America is, at best, uncertain.

#### D. Other Elements in the Catholic Response

##### 1. Emphasis on Ceremony.

In commenting on the current revival of the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America, Dr. Baez-Camargo says:

. . . . .

1. Dunne: A Padre Views South America, p. ix.
2. Considine, op. cit., p. 15.

One of the main aspects of this revival is purely ceremonial. There is a resurgence of splendor, of elaborate, dramatic rites, full of pageantry, music, and color. The worship of relics and images is central, combined with the paraphernalia of mass rallies. To the Latin American soul, so sensitive to aesthetic values and so fond of sensorial experiences, all this seems to hold an almost irresistible appeal.<sup>1</sup>

Indicative of this appeal is the attitude expressed by Ignacio M. Altamirano, a prominent Mexican liberal and an outspoken atheist, who confessed his atheism by saying, "Yes, but let nobody dare to touch the Virgin of Guadalupe."<sup>2</sup>

In 1952 the Church in Colombia conducted a "Peace Campaign" which was climaxed on June 20th when acting-President Roberto Urdaneta reconsecrated the nation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and Pope Pius XII spoke to the Colombian people by radio from the Vatican.<sup>3</sup> Rallies, parades, and processions were utilized in this campaign, and in many places the movement took an anti-Protestant turn.

The concern of the Church over the advances of Protestantism has undoubtedly been behind this aspect of the Roman Catholic revival as it has in other areas. The Church realizes that it must strengthen its hold on the people if it is to stem the advancing tide of Protestantism.

## 2. A New Interest in the Bible.

An encouraging element in the Catholic response is a new interest in the Bible on the part of the Roman Church. For centuries the Bible was kept from the laity, but this picture is changing. The sale of Roman Catholic Bibles has been quite brisk, and prices have been

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1. Baez-Camargo: "A Roman Catholic Revival in Latin America," Presbyterian Survey, January, 1952, p. 5.
2. Baez-Camargo: "Latin America," op. cit., p. 243.
3. Evangelical Confederation of Colombia: Report on Religious Persecution in Colombia, S. A., Bulletin No. 7, p. 10.

greatly reduced. In explaining this situation, one missionary states, "We think we are not far from right when we affirm that the extension of the evangelical movement and the consequent spread of Protestant Bibles have brought it about."<sup>1</sup>

Within recent years two new Spanish translations of the Bible have appeared, both made directly from the Hebrew and Greek. This is a significant fact in the light of the traditional policy of the Roman Church in Iberian countries.<sup>2</sup>

The book, What Is the Bible and How to Study It, by the French Catholic, Madeleine Chasles, has been published by an official publisher of the Roman Catholic Church, and some repercussions are beginning to be felt from its influence. This book has played a significant role in the current French Catholic Biblical revival. It begins with the statement, "The Bible is not a Protestant book," and then goes on to encourage Catholics not to be afraid to study it.<sup>3</sup>

In many Roman Catholic Churches the Scriptures are now being read in Spanish, and printed copies are then distributed to the people after the service.<sup>4</sup>

Although this Biblical revival has not grown to any major proportions as yet, it is a hopeful sign in an otherwise dark picture.

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1. Wilton M. Nelson: "More than the Bible?" Latin American Evangelist, November-December, 1952, p. 171.
2. Baez-Camargo: "A Roman Catholic Revival in Latin America," Presbyterian Survey, January, 1952, p. 6.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.

### 3. A Plea For Doctrinal Preaching and Theological Study.

Following his extended trip through South America, Father Dunne said, "Many of the sermons I have heard have been such as not to encourage a man to return. Besides an overemotional quality, there has been too much yelling and rapid, excited delivery; no measured, solid reasoning."<sup>1</sup> His answer to the situation he found is, "What is needed in the sermons is less of devotional tenderness and religious emotion, and more of the rationality of Catholicism."<sup>2</sup> It has been a common complaint that the clergy has not sufficiently instructed the people, and in the face of a well-informed, virile Protestant community which is continuing to grow, the Church has awakened to the fact that the faithful must be more thoroughly instructed in their faith.

In this connection there has also arisen "an incipient revival of Catholic theological thinking."<sup>3</sup> Again, this movement is too young to be evaluated significantly, but it could be a vital factor in reviving the Roman Church in this part of the world.

### 4. Moralization Campaigns.

In an address on February 10, 1952, Pope Pius XII said:

Rome shall relive her century-old mission of spiritual teacher of peoples, not merely, as it was and is, by reason of the chair of truth, which God has established in her midst, but by the example of her people, once again fervent in faith, exemplary in morals, one in the fulfillment of religious and civil duties, and, if it please the Lord, prosperous and happy.<sup>4</sup>

. . . . .

1. Dunne: A Padre Views South America, pp. 267-8.
2. Ibid., p. 267.
3. Baez-Camargo: "A Roman Catholic Revival in Latin America," Presbyterian Survey, January, 1952, p. 6.
4. Pius XII: "Roots of Modern Evils," Vital Speeches, March 1, 1952, p. 293.



In connection with this effort to be "exemplary in morals," some Roman Catholic groups in Latin America have begun to launch big "moralization campaigns." These are especially directed against "pornographic shows and literature, gambling, prostitution, and other social evils."<sup>1</sup> Dr. Baez-Camargo says of this movement:

Since in Latin America there has been a wide traditional gap between religious practices and practical religion or personal ethics, this new stress, although in danger of staying on superficial levels, is nevertheless something to be welcomed, encouraged, and watched with reasonable expectation.<sup>2</sup>

#### E. Summary and Conclusion

The current revival within the Roman Catholic Church of Latin America which has come about, to some extent at least, by the growth of Protestantism in that part of the world has included a strengthening and extension of the ecclesiastical activities of the Church. Of these, Catholic Action, with its attempt to organize the laity, is one of the most significant. Catholic laymen are banded together into an official apostolate to work under the direction of the hierarchy in their respective social classes, businesses, vocations, or professions. In this way the Church is able to wield its power more effectively in every area of life.

Because of the tremendous shortage of clergy in the Latin American Church, large numbers of foreign priests are now ministering in these countries, and larger numbers are needed to meet the present conditions. Some priests are coming from the young men in the various

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1. Baez-Camargo: "A Roman Catholic Revival in Latin America," Presbyterian Survey, January, 1952, p. 6.
2. Ibid.

countries, but because of the disrepute in which the clergy was often held and because of the Latin American male's basic indifference toward the Church, the number of this group is relatively small. The success or failure of the Church in providing an adequate clergy in these lands may be the key to the future of Roman Catholicism in Latin America.

The Church has utilized the irresistible appeal which ceremony holds for the Latin American soul to draw the people to its folds. It has broken with the past in making the Bible in Spanish translation available to the laity. It has sensed the need for instructing the people in the essentials of their faith and for theological study on the part of those who would do the instructing. It has launched moralization campaigns aimed at narrowing the gap that has traditionally existed between theoretical and practical religion.

Some of the elements in this response are encouraging if they could be carried far enough. The difficulty is that they too often remain on a superficial level and are never allowed to expand lest they should produce another Reformation within the ranks of the Church.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Latin America is currently witnessing the rapid growth of a comparatively young but spiritually powerful Protestant community, and at the same time, a revival in the well-entrenched but spiritually weak Roman Catholic Church. This thesis has been concerned with the relationship between these two movements, especially as the former has provided the stimulus for the latter.

A number of factors have entered into the development of the situation as it exists today. In the first place, the Roman Catholic practice of admitting large numbers of people into the Church through the rite of baptism alone produced a church that is Christian in name only. In many places pagan gods and pagan ceremonies were fused with Christian worship in a syncretism which emphasized form rather than content in religion. This trend tended to alienate the intellectual classes from the Church, and the men especially came to regard the Church as something for women and children. This had the further consequence of making the priesthood an undesirable occupation for young men from the upper classes of society. Thus, with an inadequate number of priests most of whom came from the lower classes, the spiritual condition of the Church continued to decline.

Since the Roman Church held undisputed sovereignty in Latin America from the days of the Spanish conquest until the coming of independence, it was able to control public education. As a result, formal education was primarily to train the clergy and a few other

select leaders, so that today approximately 80 per cent of Latin America is still illiterate.

Having entered Latin America with the conquerors, the Roman Church remained the Church of the conquerors. There was an essential union of Church and State with the result that other faiths were excluded from these lands. With the establishment of independent republics with constitutional governments, a measure of religious liberty was introduced into Latin America, and the door was open for the entrance of Protestantism. Since almost everyone in these lands had been baptized Catholic, the Church was still able to exercise a considerable measure of control over them even though it did not now have legal grounds on which to enforce its will.

In Colombia the Roman Church retained a more significant measure of control than in almost any other Latin American country, and for many years the Archbishop of Bogotá named the man who would be president. A split in the Catholic (Conservative) Party in 1930 brought the Liberals to power with a consequent weakening of the power of the Church and the development of a real democracy. A similar split in the Liberal ranks in 1946 brought the Conservatives back into power, and once more the power of the Church began to be felt. In 1948 riots in Bogotá and other large cities led to the establishment of a virtual dictatorship under Laureano Gomez, an admirer of Franco and a fanatical Conservative. Under this government, the Roman Church is again attempting to gain supremacy to the exclusion of other religious groups.

Protestantism began its march in Latin America with the coming of independence. It came first as an educational movement. It brought

with it also an emphasis on the Scriptures, and it attempted to minister to the needs of the whole man, physical as well as spiritual. At first the progress was slow; but as the confidence of the people was gained, the advance became more rapid, and the past quarter of a century has seen an increase in their numbers of approximately 500 per cent.

The Roman Catholic reaction to this Protestant advance has been varied. Some see it as a challenge to greater endeavor on the part of the Roman Church. Others, however, see it as a challenge to a religious war and proceed to attack the Protestants both verbally and physically.

One further factor which complicates the Latin American scene is the rise of nationalism. The anti-Protestant fires are kindled by the Roman Church by telling the people that the Protestants have come to "Yankeefy" them and thus destroy their national unity. While the Catholic claim is basically untrue, it has been used effectively in many cases because of this strong feeling of nationalism.

In Colombia, the country in which the study centers, there appear to be three major areas of activity in which the Roman Catholic Church is active which may be termed non-ecclesiastical. These are public education, politics and government, and persecution. The Church is able to control public education by domination of the Ministry of Education, by sending priests into the schools to teach religion, and by controlling normal school education. Besides this, it maintains its own extensive system of parochial schools. On the negative side, it has worked for the closing of Protestant schools and has encouraged discrimination against children who attend Protestant schools.

The Roman Church has profited by the present political situation in Colombia since the party in power favors union of Church and State. The Church has used this relationship to obtain a measure of censorship over the press and radio and to have its labor union recognized, and in turn to use these agencies as means of furthering its own program. It has also sought to expand its social program, especially where Protestant social agencies are at work. This social program is probably more of a means than an end, however.

The persecution of Protestants in Colombia has ranged from a campaign of lies to bombing of churches and outright murder. Over seven hundred cases of religious persecution have been documented by the Evangelical Confederation of Colombia during the past five years, and this represents only a fraction of the actual number. This situation is explained by Roman Catholic spokesmen as the work of fanatical laymen, as part of the political unrest, or as exaggerations and lies conjured up by the Protestants. Only rarely does a liberal Catholic dare to suggest that there may be foundation to the reports of the Confederation. A number of solutions to this problem have been suggested, but the present trend in Colombia seems to be toward a Roman Catholic monopoly.

A part of this Roman Catholic reaction also includes activities which are ecclesiastical in nature. Primary among these is the movement known as Catholic Action. This organization seeks to bring the laity to the aid of the hierarchy in carrying out the total program of the Church. Its first aim is avowedly to deepen the spiritual lives of its members, and then through them to reach out into every area of life to make it Catholic.

Because of the acute shortage of clergy in Latin America, it has been necessary for the Roman Catholic Church in North America to launch an extensive missionary program aimed at rescuing the Church in the lands to the south, and today 36 per cent of all Roman Catholic missionaries from this country are in Latin America.

Other elements in this Roman Catholic revival are an emphasis on ceremony, a new interest in the Bible, a plea for doctrinal preaching and for theological study, and a movement to improve moral conditions.

With the possibility of a twentieth century reformation before it, the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America is desperately working to retain its position of dominance in that part of the world. It appears that the Roman Church must be revived spiritually and morally or else see its hold on the people continue to slip away from it. In the meantime, a young but virile Protestant Church is exercising an influence in these lands out of all proportion to its numbers. It is not in Latin America to fight the Roman Catholic Church. It is there to bring the "Good News" of Jesus Christ to those who have known only ignorance and superstition. If its presence causes a genuine spiritual revival within the folds of the Roman Church, it will have accomplished a significant measure of success. On the other hand, an absence of such a revival will necessitate the use of other means to stem the advance of Protestantism, and this seems to be the case in Colombia. The future of organized missions in this land is very uncertain, but the Colombian Protestant Christians have proved that no device short of death will put an end to their witness for Christ. It is this dauntless spirit which makes Protestantism the force which it is in Latin America today.



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