THE PROGRESSIVE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN LATIN AMERICA: Giving Voice or Listening to Voices?

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CONFLICT AND COMPETITION: THE LATIN AMERICAN CHURCH IN A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT. Edited by Edward L. Cleary and Hannah Stewart-Gambino. (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1992. Pp. 233. $35.00 cloth, $16.95 paper.)

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN NICARAGUA. By Manzar Foroohar. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989. Pp. 262. $39.50 cloth, $12.95 paper.)

BASE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN BRAZIL. By W. E. Hewitt. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991. Pp. 150. $24.95.)

KINGDOMS COME: RELIGION AND POLITICS IN BRAZIL. By Rowan Ireland. (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1992. Pp. 262. $39.95.)

POPULAR VOICES IN LATIN AMERICAN CATHOLICISM. By Daniel H. Levine. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992. Pp. 403. $24.95.)

THE PROGRESSIVE CHURCH IN LATIN AMERICA. Edited by Scott Mainwaring and Alexander Wilde. (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989. Pp. 340. $32.95.)

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND POLITICS IN NICARAGUA AND COSTA RICA. By Philip J. Williams. (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989. Pp. 228. $34.95.)

The Problem of the 1980s

The decade of the 1980s was a difficult one for the progressive Catholic Church in Latin America. Conceived thirty years ago in the womb of the Second Vatican Council, the People's Church grew in the 1960s and 1970s under the shadow of dictatorship and reached a kind of maturity in 1979, when priests nourished by the theology of liberation found themselves walking the corridors of power in revolutionary Nicaragua.[1] In retrospect, it now appears that the Sandinista Revolution may

1. On the emergence of the progressive Catholic Church, see Lernoux (1982, 1989), Dodson (1979), Berryman (1980), Mainwaring (1986), Bruneau (1974), and Smith (1982). On

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have represented the Popular Pastoral's high watermark. Over the last ten years, expansion and utopian hope have been replaced by retrenchment and, in many places, decline.[2] It has become increasingly difficult to ignore the political fragility of the Christian base communities (CEBs) and the slowdown and even stagnation in their growth.[3] Activists and scholars alike, wishing to assess the potentiality of the progressive Catholic project in the 1990s, are now struggling to understand the internal and external forces constraining it. In what ways, researchers are asking, have Vatican policy, redemocratization, the growth of Pentecostalism, and the inner tensions of the liberationist model itself contributed to the current crisis within the progressive Catholic Church? The works under review here will be assessed in relation to the light (or lack of it) that they shed on such questions.

Two Recent Edited Volumes

From this perspective, two recent collections of essays are something of a mixed bag. *The Progressive Church in Latin America,* edited by Scott Mainwaring and Alexander Wilde, brings together nine essays on Central America, Brazil, and Peru. Several of these focus in traditional fashion on the power of CEBs to raise consciousness and motivate action. Catalina Romero argues that in Peru, CEBs have helped the masses become aware "of their active role in history and of their possibilities for collectively becoming an agent for social change" (p. 267). In El Salvador, Jorge Cáceres Prendes suggests, CEBs have been influential in building mass support for the Frente Farabundo Martí de Liberación Nacional (FMLN). Although such claims are no doubt accurate as far as they go, they sidestep the problem of accounting for the relatively small number of persons actually involved in the People's Church and also that of representing the CEBs' ideological diversity.

Other contributors to *The Progressive Church in Latin America* face these issues head-on. Margaret Crahan argues that in revolutionary Nicaragua, it was precisely because conservative, anti-Marxist bishops maintained considerable influence among the masses that the Sandinistas were obliged to spend so much political capital responding to Cardinal Miguel Obando y Bravo. Scott Mainwaring finds that Brazilian CEBs are characterized by ideological naiveté "and relatively shallow political involvements" (p. 175). Ana Maria Doimo notes that Brazil's CEBs are ideologically ambiguous, being constrained by the church hierarchy and its commitment

priests in the Nicaraguan Revolution, see Randall (1983), Dodson and O'Shaughnessy (1990), and Kirk (1992).

2. References to the shift are ubiquitous. On Brazil, see Della Cava (1989), Brandão (1992), C. Boff (1992), and Comblin (1987).

3. On the theology of CEBs, see Azevedo (1987), L. Boff (1986), and Guimarães (1978).

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to universal love. Luis Pásara presents an overall critique of the progressive Catholic Church, declaring the CEBs to be a movement led by guilt-ridden middle-class priests, one that dresses authoritarianism in egalitarian garb and purveys an abstract discourse that claims to be concrete. According to Pásara, the new church has led the masses "to rebuff the base communities promoted there by radical Catholics" (p. 298).

Perhaps because *The Progressive Church* compiles papers from a 1983 conference, it does not thoroughly treat the issues of the Vatican's reaction and the redemocratization occurring throughout Latin America. Edward Cleary's and Hannah Stewart-Gambino's edited collection, *Conflict and Competition: The Latin American Church in a Changing Environment,* pays considerably more attention than the Mainwaring and Wilde collection does to the circumstances that have forced the current round of soul-searching upon the church. Yet the essays that Cleary and Stewart-Gambino include, with one exception, fail to furnish the kind of local-level, "bottom-up" analysis that might shed the brightest light on the processes of division and retreat.

The impact of the return to democracy in Chile, Stewart-Gambino suggests in her contribution, has been to move the episcopacy from its earlier "prophetic" and denunciatory role to its current mediating and conciliatory one. Herein lies the problem. As Stewart-Gambino observes dryly, "The church's commitment to the theme of reconciliation will distance the institutional church from the sectors demanding justice" (p. 39). Thomas Bruneau and William Hewitt, in contrast, argue that redemocratization has led a growing number of progressive Brazilian bishops to focus their energy away from politics, preferring instead to attack "moral evils" like pornography and abortion. The CEBs, meanwhile, have become less interested in "direct forms of social action" and more in their own "spiritual roles" (p. 60). The problem is that neither Stewart-Gambino nor Bruneau and Hewitt provide any clues as to why CEBs at the local level move in one political direction or another. Without a thicker description of the popular base, such arguments float in a void.

It is in this regard that Carol Drogus's piece on CEBs in Brazil in *Conflict and Competition* is so helpful. She makes the point that CEB members, always few in number, tend to be longstanding practicing Catholics. Consequently, they are not clean slates on which a pure liberationist discourse can be written but rather holders of diverse ideological views with which liberationist Catholicism must interact. This insight represents an important advance in the debate. Drogus does not, however, develop an argument as to which factors—such as age, education, gender, and so forth—might shape these ideological interactions.

Collections of essays designed as overviews of the progressive Catholic Church in Latin America are inevitably frustrating. The reader is left with nagging doubts: is the progressive church a democratic con-

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sciousness-raiser and mobilizer or a perpetuator of hierarchy and authoritarianism in a new guise? In practice, the new church is undoubtedly both, but this simultaneity is hard to depict within the scope of an average essay or article. Furthermore, the collections reviewed here are based primarily on the deeds and words of bishops and theologians. We are left yearning for the kind of local-level detail that would help us grasp how Latin Americans experience and live with the tensions in the church's identity.

Two Works on Nicaragua

Both the strengths and weaknesses of the top-down perspective are illustrated in Manzar Foroohar's *The Catholic Church and Social Change in Nicaragua*. To her credit, Foroohar strives to tell the story of mobilization leading to the 1979 revolution through the voices not just of the bishops but of the Capuchin, Maryknoll, and Jesuit activists in poor neighborhoods and rural areas as well as the voices of the intellectuals and students in organizations like the Movimiento Cristiano Revolucionario.

Still, the limits of Foroohar's material are evident. Her sources are primarily the discourse of clergy, theologians, the state, and the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN), as reported in *La Prensa*, *The New York Times*, the *New Left Review*, and the *Washington Post*. While purporting to report on the transformation of consciousness among Nicaraguan poor, the book tends to represent the thinking not of the working class but rather of its religious (and often non-Nicaraguan) self-appointed tutors. For example, the consciousness formed in the famous base community at Solentamine is represented entirely through the interpretations of Ernesto Cardenal and outside visitors. In one large working-class area, readers are informed, the "residents were 'filled with jubilation' when the report [of the guerrilla operation of 27 December 1974] came in over the radio; as one Maryknoll Sister said, 'It was like hearing our own salvation history'" (p. 137). Here, the conflation of the sentiments of a nun with those of "the people" is complete.

This kind of conflation stands in the way of understanding to whom CEB-based consciousness-raising projects appeal and their role in mobilization. Because the interpretations are those of the consciousness-raisers themselves, the appeal of liberationist ideas and practices is regarded as self-evident and exposure to them as leading automatically to mobilization. For example, Foroohar asserts that a consciousness-raising program of Capuchins in the province of Zelaya "found a very enthusiastic audience" (p. 148). But who among the two hundred thousand people in that province were actually a part of this "enthusiastic audience"—men, women, older people, agricultural laborers, petty merchants, the literate? And what specific contribution did attending consciousness-

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raising seminars make to mobilization, particularly in relation to the mobilizing appeals of the FSLN (such as land reform) and the radicalizing process of increased repression? To what extent did the peasants of Jalapa join FSLN organizations because of the liberationist ideas they were exposed to, and to what extent was their mobilization the fruit of the anger they felt when the National Guard turned their churches into torture chambers? Did the peasants uniformly have to be exposed to liberationist Catholicism in order to feel and act upon such violations of their human rights? Answers to such questions remain elusive without careful analysis of local-level voices.

Occasionally, Foroohar allows readers to hear the voice of a working-class person mobilized by a CEB, as when she quotes the testimonies collected by Margaret Randall (e.g., p. 132). Foroohar does not, however, situate these voices socially. It is easy enough to say that "For many Nicaraguan Christians, joining the FSLN in its fight against Somoza was a necessary step in proving their belief in the Bible" (p. 133). It is rather harder to specify in social terms who these "many" were, or the range of variation in the ways they understood the connection between faith and political action. What of the CEB participants who were less than heroic, those who failed to make a perfect connection between faith and commitment, and those who struggled with inner doubts and fears? Why erase their experiences?

Avoiding such erasure is important for understanding why in the 1980s many CEB members accommodated non-liberationist clergy, joined organizations like COPROSA (a U.S.AID project designed to discourage community leaders from supporting the government), and converted to movements like charismatic Catholicism and Pentecostalism.[4] The importance of conversions is hinted at by Foroohar's own account of the response of the inhabitants of Riguero after the 1972 earthquake. Many of them began gathering in the streets of the barrio every night, "singing protest songs and reading biblical passages or poetry" (p. 128). The practice of Bible-reading in the streets is common among Protestants. Were these inhabitants perhaps involved in such practices, or were they limited to CEBs?

In *The Catholic Church in Nicaragua and Costa Rica,* Philip Williams relies on a richer array of sources than does Foroohar, including numerous interviews and mimeographed circulars and publications. This study is useful in detailing political linkages between various groups: for example, between the student-based Movimiento Cristiano Revolucionario and the FSLN; or between the Delegados de Palabra (lay ministers) and the radical Capuchin fathers. Williams's book is also helpful in suggesting

4. On Nicaraguan Pentecostalism, see Dodson and O'Shaughnessy (1990) and Lancaster (1988, 1992).

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mechanisms through which the revolution, in its triumph, may have weakened the political dimension of the CEBs. Many of the best church leaders, Williams argues, gave up their work as Delegados de Palabra and catechists to become leaders in the FSLN. Meanwhile, those who remained in the CEBs reduced their political activism to avoid competing with the Comités de Defensa Civil.

Yet Williams faces the same problem as Foroohar: without extensive first-hand, local-level testimony from non-elites, it remains difficult to assess the extent to which particular mobilizations were due primarily to the political space created for them and the extent to which they expressed a specific form of political consciousness. Failing to represent "the masses" through their own voices condemns them to the level of stereotype. Based on an interview with a Capuchin father, Williams observes that the pastoral was "aimed at campesinos' ignorance. . . . the courses encouraged the campesinos to search for ways to change their situation of injustice and oppression" (p. 49). This reading of peasant consciousness disregards the everyday resistance and complex awareness of oppression that existed before the arrival of organic intellectuals bent on enlightening the masses.[5] One might object that Foroohar and Williams are historians and therefore constrained by the historians' typically literate and elite-based sources. Yet both writers make use of oral history. Certainly, studies like these should enrich their archive by adding the oral narratives of non-elites.

The Church Viewed "from Below"

Using different methodologies, three recent books have grappled directly with the problem of how to explore the progressive church "from below." In the sociological mold is W. E. Hewitt's *Base Christian Communities and Social Change in Brazil.* Hewitt studied twenty-two CEBs in São Paulo in 1984, and twenty of the same ones in 1988. Both times, Hewitt employed participant observation and self-administered questionnaires, collecting data from 275 respondents in 1984 and 69 in 1988 (p. 41). In contrast with the common practice of treating CEBs as a primarily working-class phenomenon, Hewitt examined equal numbers of CEBs located in working- and middle-class neighborhoods.

The result is a revealing, if brief, deromanticization of the CEBs of São Paulo in the 1980s, with implications for these groups throughout Brazil. Hewitt begins by locating CEBs along a continuum of political activism ranging from "simple devotional groups" to "classical or ideal-typical CEBs" that combine neighborhood activism with consciousness-raising. Armed with this typology, Hewitt shows that political activism is

5. On this form of consciousness, see Scott (1985, 1990), Wilson (1991), Ablemann (1990), and Alonso (1992).

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deeply problematic for the CEBs in São Paulo. For example, twice as many of Hewitt's respondents in 1984 engaged in charity as in consciousness-raising. He comments, "More traditional Catholics, for whom the CEBs simply represent a new way of worshiping, often feel threatened and angered by more innovative forms of political involvement undertaken by progressives" (pp. 48–49). By 1988, "with the choice between initiating Bible study/charity circles or reflection/political discussion groups, the former has won out" (p. 93).

Hewitt goes on to problematize the CEBs' self-styled image as cells of grass-roots democracy. He reports that participation "is restricted to a very few players who are already somewhat politically aware" (p. 49). Leadership tends "to remain in the hands of a minority who have the freedom to impose their wishes on the membership at large" (p. 53), and who remain highly dependent on progressive priests to help them retain local support (p. 58).

Hewitt's study offers a rare, if cursory, glimpse into the social composition of the CEBs, which have usually been represented as simple homogeneous nuclei of poverty. His analysis reveals instead the existence of both middle- and working-class CEBs, and within the latter, a preponderance of what he calls "the working poor." The "poorest of the poor," despite their ideological significance in liberation theology, remain conspicuously absent from the CEBs because they have "frequently lost all hope of ever removing themselves from their disadvantaged situation" (p. 66). Further, Hewitt found that two-thirds to three-quarters of his respondents were at least thirty years old, a result that he attributes to the CEBs' unwillingness to discuss issues "of intense interest to youth, such as birth control and premarital sex" (p. 62). Finally, the vast majority of CEB participants are women, and an increasing number of them are gaining access to positions of leadership. This trend does not imply, however, that CEBs are progressive on women's issues. Hewitt argues that most women participate as a simple extension of their traditional role as the backbone of institutional Catholicism. "Women's issues per se," he notes, "were rarely discussed in the sample CEBs" (p. 64).[6]

Although all these issues are undoubtedly worth raising, Hewitt's brevity (the text of his book is just over a hundred pages) as well as his reliance on survey data deprive his interpretations of the kind of depth they deserve. Only rarely are the voices of CEB participants heard, and only once or twice are readers treated to illustrative life historical material. These absences become most apparent when Hewitt addresses the question of the impact of CEBs on Brazilian society and politics at large. He points out, unremarkably, that CEBs at the politically activist end of his typological continuum have been engaged in pressing local officials

6. On women in the CEBs, see Drogus (1990) and Alvarez (1990).

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for infrastructural improvements (p. 86). To what extent is this kind of action part of a process of forging a new sense of citizenship and rights, rather than simply reinforcing a traditional politics of patron-clientelism? Hewitt argues the former, claiming that efforts to win infrastructural improvements implant "in the poor a sense of empowerment" (p. 85). Although he may be right, his reliance on quantitative rather than qualitative data to illustrate the "sense of empowerment" is unpersuasive. In 1984, he reports, "58 percent of respondents from Type VI [the most activist] CEBs, as compared with about half of all CEB participants generally, reported enhanced consciousness of social and political problems as a function of group membership" (p. 86). How does this fairly minor difference in response rates translate into a sense of empowerment and citizenship? What does it mean in everyday terms to become "aware of social and political problems," to feel a "sense of empowerment," to regard oneself as a "citizen"? Can all such experiences, attitudes, and beliefs be equated? To make arguments about such things as "senses of citizenship" stick, the researcher must provide thicker ethnographic and verbal detail.

Readers seeking verbal detail will find it in Daniel Levine's ambitious and complex *Popular Voices in Latin American Catholicism*. Based on hundreds of interviews with participants in the Colombian and Venezuelan Catholic Church, Levine's key argument is that wherever the progressive project has had room to develop, participants find their "voice" and come to espouse a vision of themselves as subjects able to make their own history. But wherever the traditional (nonprogressive) Catholic project has prevailed, Catholics remain "voiceless," continuing in general to see themselves as passive objects in a world determined by forces beyond their control. For Levine, this discovery of "voice" constitutes the progressive church's most enduring contribution to social change in Latin America.

Popular Voices in Latin American Catholicism has many strengths, the most impressive of which is its sheer abundance of material. The numerous lengthy quotations from field interviews provide a cumulative feel for "being there," a textured sense of the parameters of CEB discourse, and an archive for further analysis and interpretation. Occasionally this abundance teeters on excess. Still, in accumulating so much material with such care and making it accessible, Levine has performed an important service to scholarship on the Latin American progressive church.

The book's main substantive contribution is development of a highly nuanced view of CEBs. Rejecting the monolithic portraits of CEBs as radical rabble-rousers, Levine explores the range of their political variation and situates it in economic, social, and ideological contexts at the level of nation, region, and parish. In theoretical terms, Levine's book throws its weight with those who argue that the realm of politics must be

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conceived not as limited to the state but as including ideas about activism, power, and governance that are developed and played out in everyday life.

Despite these strengths, *Popular Voices in Latin American Catholicism* fails to address the issue of the Catholic Church's current stagnation in any sustained way other than to blame it on Vatican policy. This allocation of responsibility results from Levine's avoidance of the contradictory tendencies in his informants' discourse and practice. This skirting leads in particular to an exaggerated contrast between "pre-" and "post-CEB" consciousness. The "pre-" era becomes an antediluvian age of silence, during which poor Latin Americans suffering from "voicelessness" did not even have "words to speak" (p. 4). Before the arrival of the CEB Church, "sharing experiences" and "pooling resources" was "hitherto unknown" (p. 27).

Levine's Manichean portrait neglects the diverse array of self-definitions—via kinship, friendship, ethnicity, non-Catholic religion, racial identity, neighborhood, family, and community—that nurture among working-class Latin Americans a belief, independent of the progressive church, that in many contexts their "voices" indeed count for something. In relation to non-CEB Catholicism in particular, Levine's portrayal ignores the collective dimensions of organized charity through traditional lay associations, the common practice of praying for others, the community-based novena, and various other collective religious practices (see Fernandes 1982; Maues 1987; Zaluar 1983; and Slater 1985). Furthermore, while Levine views the traditional use of holy water as a "superstition" (p. 175), one can also interpret it as an enactment of meanings independent of those assigned by the Catholic Church, such as ecological balance, life, fertility, and kin continuity. It may be more illuminating to regard such practices and symbols as components of a complex and contradictory popular consciousness in which anti-hegemonic values play a key role. Failure to grapple with this possibility leads to a certain paternalism. "Without voices," Levine writes, "the mass of ordinary faithful remain silent objects. The church acts in their name, providing leadership and authoritative guidance" (p. 5).[7]

Levine skirts ambiguity not only on the "pre-CEB" side but on the CEB side as well. For example, he avoids reporting discourse that runs counter to the idealized role of the progressive CEB as consciousness-raiser. He reports, "Even in communities where illiteracy remains the rule, there is usually *someone* who knows how to read, and others enjoy listening and value the opportunity to discuss what it all means together with friends and neighbors" (p. 136, Levine's emphasis). Yet might there

7. This attitude at least represents an improvement over that described by Levine's informants: "Before they had no awareness of their dignity as human beings, they thought they were like animals that neither needed nor merited anything. This was especially so in that part of La Azauncha where people are the most backward" (p. 232).

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not be others who resent this new dependency on literacy? Might not some of these be attracted by the Pentecostal option, in which literacy does not figure to the same degree in determining authority? Answering such questions requires more direct testimony from illiterate men and women about how they feel about this new form of authority.[8]

Levine insists on taking informants' talk "at face value" (p. 27), thereby blurring the influence of the Catholic Church's own authoritative discourse over the content of the everyday speech of the faithful. For example, church discourse tends to erase internal differentiation among "the poor" and to shape autobiographical narrative so that one's "pre-CEB" life comes to be represented as entirely passive. At times I wondered whether hearing the official liberationist version of events often enough had shaped Levine's own observations. He declares, for example, that in Bible reflection circles, "participants jump right in to discuss how what is spoken of in the Bible is happening here and now, to people like themselves" (p. 138). What of the very large percentage of participants who attend reflection circles and remain silent?[9] If the circles are so appealing, why do they draw so few participants? If, as Levine's informants report, the progressive priests of Meléndez are "widely missed," why is it that less than a hundred local people participate in its CEBs?

Of the works reviewed here, Rowan Ireland's *Kingdoms Come: Religion and Politics in Brazil* is the most ethnographically rich. Drawing on extensive participant observation and interviews in the Brazilian Northeast between 1976 and 1989, Ireland has succeeded in crafting a grassroots account of the progressive Catholic Church as well as its main rivals, the Pentecostal Assembly of God, xangô, umbanda, and Kardecism. In so doing, his chief aim was to "represent how particular groups of Brazilian citizens constituted political cultures, in and through the living of their several distinctive religious traditions, and how they variously endorsed, rejected, negotiated, inverted, subverted, or enacted the political-economic projects of the rich and powerful in Brazil" (p. 10).

On the whole, Ireland achieves his aim, presenting a rich account of each religion's politico-ideological tensions while seeking to identify their ideological centers of gravity. For example, although *crentes* (Pentecostals) refuse to "rally the faithful for social transformation in the name of this-worldly utopia," their "Old Testament images of a people struggling against injustice may motivate [them] to denounce and resist the unjust patron of the compromised bureaucrat" (p. 107). Ireland also distinguishes between the political tendencies at work in xangô, umbanda,

8. Levine offers only a single quotation on this subject, from "an educated man" (p. 196).

9. On this topic, in addition to Hewitt's study, see Brandão (1980), Macedo (1986), and Mariz (1989).

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and Kardecism: whereas xangô constructs a communitarian, anti-hegemonic practice, umbanda and Kardecism reinforce patron-clientelism and authoritarianism. As for the Catholic Church, although the CEB embraces as its official orthodoxy the communitarian project of liberation theology, Ireland discovered that many CEB participants continue to regard Jesus Christ as a lawgiver rather than a liberator and that patron-clientelism continues to dominate relations between members and Padre Cícero, the popular saint (pp. 189–90). Here *Kingdoms Come* explores more vigorously than any other current work the gaps between liberationist discourse and various popular understandings of it, the extent to which its "limited triumphs . . . relate more to notional than to real religion, to outward forms rather than to a profound sea change in the religious construction of everyday life" (p. 196). Ireland thus offers unrivaled insight into the limitations of liberationist CEBs in transforming the consciousness of their participants.

In the end, however, the high quality of Ireland's material raises important questions that he has not faced. First, he has elicited a great deal of verbal discourse that he interprets in "political" terms—but whose definition of *political* is he using? While he claims to "broaden categories of political action," Ireland's own categories seem fairly narrow, limited to traditional political-science textbook arenas of class and the relations between civil society and the state. Absent from his analysis are other equally important arenas of everyday politics: those of gender, age, sexuality, and race, the last a particularly troubling blind spot for a study on Brazil.

Consider gender relations. Ireland reports the case of an eighteen-year-old named Biu, who when faced with an abusive husband, turned to Dona Paula, an umbanda medium. In consulting with Paula, Biu is encouraged to interpret her problem in what Ireland calls "individualistic terms": "the private trouble and competitive relationships are emphasized, rather than any public issue that might be discerned or any communal solution that might be appropriate" (p. 149). Ireland's distinction here between "private" and "public" has been forcefully critiqued by feminist scholarship for the past twenty years. Viewed through the lens of gender relations, readers are obliged to wonder about the extent to which Biu experiences her visits to Paula as giving her the power she needs to confront and cope with her troubled domestic relations. If so, and even if such empowerment is never translated into "communal solutions," can one really dismiss her strategy with the facile equation of "personal" equals "individualistic" equals "non-public" equals (by implication) non-political?

As troubling as Ireland's light treading over gender politics is his avoidance of race, that most tortured of Brazilian political arenas. For example, when a Pentecostal man named Severino meets Ireland after

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five years, he observes that Ireland's hair has grayed, while his own has remained black. "That," Ireland reports, "was because my white blood was weaker than his African blood" (p. 49). Ireland then simply drops the subject. Severino's comment draws us into the heart of Brazilian racial rhetoric. Judging from his pictures in *Kingdoms Come*, Severino probably identifies himself as a *moreno* or mulato. For him to speak positively (even if in a biologically reductionist way) of his African blood goes against the grain of the conventional discourse of Brazilians of mixed race. His comment ought to raise the question of the extent to which being a crente is relevant to revaluing an identity that includes African ancestry. Ireland offers no clue.

There are other problems with the book. While Ireland may be right in his rough correlations between religious identities and political stances, he leaves those stances disconnected from action. How and under what conditions are various stances transformed into action? How does action itself reshape the stances? For all the religions he examines, Ireland bases his analysis on what individuals say they would do, not on what they actually are doing in political participatory terms. For example, he does not inquire into the kinds and degrees of participation in social movements at the local level. If he had, he might have been a bit more cautious about concluding that a natural affinity exists between the crente vision and avoidance of grass-roots movements.[10]

Most generally, *Kingdoms Come* presents a series of religions as if in isolation rather than in dynamic competition with each other. Yet any denizen of the urban periphery in Brazil knows that religions there are not neatly compartmentalized groups but fluid rivals in a jostling competition for souls, through which adherents move in sequence and simultaneously. What impact might such a realization have on Ireland's notion of the relation between religion and politics? If the chief pattern is that of change, what implications does it have for forming enduring political visions?

The Next Step?

Throughout this review, I have insisted that in order to understand the current crisis of the progressive church in Latin America scholars cannot rest content with analyzing the discourse and practice of cardinals, bishops, priests, nuns, theologians, pastoral agents, or even the most articulate CEB members. A broader and richer range of voices must be listened to carefully, for what they say and do not say, for both their confirmation of liberationist orthodoxy as well as their contradiction of it. To this fairly straightforward methodological point I would like to add a

10. On the complex interrelations between Pentecostalism and political practice, see Stoll and Burnett (n.d.).

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less obvious theoretical one. Scholars must realize that in order to tell the story of the progressive Catholic Church, we can no longer tell it in isolation. Rather, we must embed it in broader histories of the formation of complex poly-religious and political arenas. Ireland has taken an important first step in *Kingdoms Come.* Yet in this increasingly mediated world, we are obliged to go beyond Ireland's Weberian premise that religious belief is privileged as a determinant of political attitudes. We must consider how religio-political discourses interact with other discourses produced and disseminated by the educational system, media, market, state, family, neighborhood, and community. By striving to represent how such discourses enter into complex and contested relation with each other, as well as with local processes of appropriation (De Certeau 1984), we can avoid regarding political attitudes as generated narrowly by religious belief. We will also, I submit, understand better the historical fortunes of religio-political movements, of which the progressive Catholic Church is only one.

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