

THE LIBERATION OF WOMEN AND THE
LIBERATION THEOLOGY MOVEMENT
IN PERU

BY

Leanne J. Dyck

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Religion
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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of women's liberation in the liberation theology movement in Latin America, specifically within a Peruvian context. My question is: "Is there liberation for women in liberation theology?" I conclude that poor Latin American women are liberated by liberation theology, as they are those, poorest of the poor, who suffer the greatest from the injustices all the poor experience. Liberation theology is not completely facilitating women's liberation as it is still reluctant to deal with certain issues which effect women's lives, issues involving reproductive rights and equality within the church structure.

In my introduction I outline the difficulties involved in studying liberation theology on the continental level, as well as the difficulties of studying liberation theology by way of texts. I therefore chose to study liberation theology in its expression in one particular country, in this instance Peru, as I knew people working within the liberation theology circles in Peru. The problems associated with a textual study lead me to use a comparative methodology, comparing texts produced by Peruvian liberation theologians with those produced by Peruvian feminists and traditionalists.

I have chosen to study the image of woman as mother in these three groups as woman's image as mother is important to the Peruvian socio-economic reality as it is as mothers that women often are active in grassroots organizations. It is also an image that is common to all three groups' texts. In the first three chapters, then, I analysis the image of woman as mother within traditionalist, liberationist, and feminist texts with the intent to show liberationist reflections in relation to other groups also working within Peru. To complement this analysis of textual images, Chapter Four examines the formation and actions of women's grassroots organizations in Peru.

Through such an examination of images and certain dynamics in the Peruvian socio-economic reality, I conclude that the image of woman as mother in the liberation theology movement in Peru is liberating, although not completely liberated. Liberation theologians have more in common with the feminists than with the traditionalists, even though they appear reluctant to raise certain issues which feminists see as essential to women's complete liberation. The ways in which liberation theologians do not deal with these issues, I conclude, are examples of how they do not follow their own methodology.

Ultimately, I am sympathetic to liberation theology even though I conclude that liberation theologians must challenge themselves to deal with gender related issues more fully.

INTRODUCTION

Because the Latin American liberation theology movement¹ claims to represent the interests of the poor, by both giving the poor a voice and assuming their perspective in the analyses of social issues and the making of theology, it cannot afford to ignore the perspective and concerns of those poor who are additionally oppressed through gender. Liberationists' support of the poor, often referred to as the "option for the poor," suggests that they should necessarily be attentive to the perspectives of poor women, those who are marginalized within a marginalized group. This thesis considers the extent to which liberation theologians have incorporated women's issues and woman's liberation into their theological agenda. Ultimately, the thesis asks whether there is liberation for women in this interpretation of Christianity which claims to concern itself with the oppressed.

An understanding of the fundamental tenets of liberation theology shows the inadequacy of a continental

¹ The emergence of liberation theology in Latin America is most often referred to as the emergence of a "movement." It must be understood, however, that this movement is not a defined group but rather a perspective adopted with varying degrees of militancy. In many conversations from July, 1989 to May, 1990, Father Francisco Moreno Rejon cautioned me not to suppose that liberation theology is like a "club" where the members have membership cards.

approach to liberation theology in respect to gender related issues. This question of women's liberation therefore will be explored specifically through an analysis of the expression of liberation theology in Peru. As becomes evident through an examination of the limitations of the textual expression of liberation theology, this thesis question is best explored through an analysis in which texts produced by liberation theologians are compared with texts produced by other groups working which deal with similar issues and work within the same social context.

In this study I will contrast the liberationist texts with texts produced by the traditional sector of the Peruvian church², and texts produced by the Peruvian feminist movement. These two groups complement the liberationist texts, as traditionalist texts represent a different perspective from within the Peruvian church, and Peruvian feminist texts represent a non-theological perspective concerning gender related issues. More specifically, the comparison focuses on "woman as mother," since development of this theme is pivotal in each of the three types of texts whenever the image of woman or women's issues are of concern.

An examination of the image of "woman as mother" in each of these groups' texts is both a theoretical and

² Whenever I refer to "church" I specifically mean the Roman Catholic church.

practical way of dealing with the question of women's liberation as it is as mothers that Peruvian women are active in grassroots organizations. After analyzing textual images of woman as mother, then, I examine the recent popular organizations in which women have become involved as mothers. The depiction of women's present day life not only complements the textual images of "woman as mother," but also illuminates the reality of women's role as mothers today in Peru. Overall, moreover, the added focus of women's participation in grassroots organizations adds significantly to our understanding of the context of the liberation theology movement in Peru, its possibilities and its problems.

In regards to this thesis question it is important to mention liberation theology's position within the Roman Catholic church. As this church excludes women from the priesthood on the basis of gender, it cannot be argued that its structure is sexist. This thesis will not deal specifically with liberation theology's position in the Roman Catholic church, however, as I believe that the answer to the problem concerning this issue is quite obvious: with the exception of a few outspoken individuals (Leonardo Boff for example), liberation theologians have not concerned themselves with the injustices of their own church structure, and thereby contradict their claims to combat oppressive structures in society. By its mere presence

within the church, liberation theology participates in a form of structural oppression against women. In essence, they do not implement that which they recommend for society as a whole within their own church community. There are reasons, however, why liberation theologians do not deal with these issues and, although they cannot escape criticism because of their posture in support of the church's structure, they can be understood within the context in which they work.

Instead of focusing upon liberation theology's support of church structure (or lack of condemnation of it), this thesis aims to explore the question of women's liberation in relation to reflections made by liberation theologians, by taking one example of liberationist theological reflection, the image of "woman as mother," and questioning if women are liberated or oppressed through this image. To begin I present a working definition of liberation theology. Such a presentation proves the necessity of a case study as opposed to a study of liberation theology in Latin American in general. The history of the emergence and development of the Peruvian liberation theology movement therefore also must be understood before this thesis question is explored.

1. A Definition of Liberation Theology

The term "liberation theology" was first coined by Peruvian priest and theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez, in a speech made in 1968. It became known to a broader audience through Gutiérrez's book, Teología de la Liberación, Perspectivas, published in 1971. Since then the term has been identified with theological movements in Asia and Africa as well as in Latin America. It is, however, for the most part used in reference to the theological reflections of a sector of the Latin American Catholic church since Vatican II, and will be used in this thesis in reference to this Latin American context.

Although liberation theology is manifested differently in particular Latin American countries, its various expressions share two fundamental characteristics: the so-called "option for the poor," and a distinct methodology in which theological reflection (referred to as "the second step") is done after a person has acted upon his/her Christian faith.³ This distinct methodology, together with

³ In various personal conversations from July, 1989 - March, 1990, with both myself and Michel Rondeau, a Ph.D. student at the Université Laval, Francisco Moreno Rejón defined liberation theology as entailing these two factors. Moreno Rejón is a Spanish priest working with Gustavo Gutiérrez in The Instituto Bartolomé de Las Casas in Rimac, Lima. He is author of Salvar la Vida de los Pobres / Aportes a la Teología Moral and numerous articles published in Páginas. He has been living and working as a priest and professor in Peru for the past seven years.

the primacy given to the poor referred to as the "option for the poor," constitutes a working definition of the term "liberation theology."

The essence of liberation theology is encapsulated in the so-called "option for the poor": the primacy given to the poor both in theological reflection and theologically based action. Christians, according to liberation theology, must favour the poor, both in the way they act and the way they reflect upon that action. The Christian life for liberation theologians is one in which people stand in solidarity with the poor, working toward the liberation of the poor from oppressive societal structures. Furthermore, liberation theologians believe that theology, as well as social, economic and historical analyses must take the perspective of the poor. This, in their opinion, is the most truthful perspective, as it is in the lives of the poor that God prefers or chooses to be manifested.⁴

Liberation theologians' interpretation of the Christian faith entails that they are actively committed to the liberation of the poor. Theology is necessarily done after the theologian has actively committed him/herself to

⁴ In the February, 1990, summer courses Gustavo Gutiérrez related this aspect of the "option for the poor" as follows: It is not that God does not like the rich. It is just that God prefers the poor. If you are given a choice between coffee and tea and you choose coffee, it is not that you do it because you hate tea. No, you simply prefer to drink coffee if the two options are at your disposal. It is where you go first. It is the same with God's preference for the poor. It is to the poor that God's concern first goes.

understanding and helping the poor, simply because the perspective of the poor could not be taken in any other way.

Gutiérrez describes the process of doing theology:

Theology is reflection, a critical attitude. Theology follows; it is the second step. ... The pastoral activity of the Church does not flow as a conclusion from theological premises. Theology does not produce pastoral activity; rather it reflects upon it. Theology must be able to find in pastoral activity the presence of the Spirit inspiring the action of the Christian community (Gutiérrez 1988: 9)

The question for Gutiérrez is not how thought inspires pastoral action, but rather how pastoral activity, commitment to the poor and their concerns, can inspire an understanding of Christianity that leads to further commitment and yet further reflection. In his February, 1990, "summer courses" in Peru which I attended, Gustavo Gutiérrez stated on two different occasions that a Christian must both act and reflect upon action. He emphasized that action alone is not enough. He said that he knows people who work with the poor but do not pray and others who pray but do not work with the poor. Neither, in his view, are fully Christians, as a Christian is someone who both acts and reflects upon action.

Gutiérrez's commitment to prayer defends the movement's theological foundation. Liberation theology therefore cannot be classified as a mere social justice movement that is simply making use of the Latin American tradition of Catholicism, as the starting point for these theologians

clearly is the Christian instruction to love one another. Though Gutiérrez and others have been inspired by Marxist theory of class struggle, Marx's thought is nothing more than a tool liberation theologians have used to help understand the very obvious class conflicts within their countries. Marx, along with the "theory" of dependency and the pedagogical advancements made by Paolo Freire, have influenced the formation of liberation theology, but these factors, however important in the initial stages of the movement, will cease to be used by liberation theologians the day they are no longer practical. Such has been the case with the theory of dependency as Gutiérrez, himself, states how he has come to recognize its limitations (Gutiérrez 1988: xxiv). The goal of liberation theology therefore is not to achieve perfect "communism" as defined by Marx, or to advance in a way dictated by any other particular theory. Instead liberation theologians aim to work toward the liberation of the poor in the most practical way presently available.

Liberation theologians' methodology excuses their inadequacies as they do not claim to know the correct way of bringing forth the poor's liberation. Theology making, in this light, is a process in which theologians learn by trial and error as they are actively involved in commitment to others in community. They aim to learn from mistakes or the inadequacies of certain tools, and to deepen their

commitment to the poor to find better tools to facilitate the liberation from oppression. Despite liberation theology's obvious European roots (the influence of Marx for example), this movement's practical commitment to the poor is its most distinguishing characteristic. This bias is the one thing that is unchanging even though it is continually being expressed in different, and hopefully even more practical, ways.

2. Problems with a Continental Focus

Due to the complexity of interpreting the "option for the poor" in differing socio-economic and cultural contexts, liberation theology is found in diverse forms in different countries in Latin America.⁵ Although the liberation theology movement can be studied on the international level with reference given to the CELAM conferences⁶ and the

⁵ An example of extreme differences between countries is in the case of the influence of the National Security State Doctrine in Peru and El Salvador. Whereas El Salvador has been significantly affected by this doctrine promoted by the United States (see North 1981), Peru has barely been affected by it (see Werlich 1978). The absence of the ideology's influence in Peru could be due to any number of factors including the characteristic of the military rule from 1968-1975. In any case liberation theology has responded differently in different countries to these and other distinct situations.

⁶ CELAM stands for Latin American Episcopal Conference. There have been three such meetings: CELAM I when the organization was born at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1955; CELAM II held in Medellin, Columbia in 1968; and CELAM III held in Puelba, Mexico in 1979. CELAM IV will be held in Santo

various interactions key figures have had with the Vatican, the movement varies so much from country to country that its richness cannot be understood unless attention is given to a particular country (see Klaiber 1989: 2).

With the increased amount of criticism it has received from the conservative factions within the Latin American church, liberation theology has had difficulty expressing itself at the CELAM conferences. At the 1979 CELAM III gathering, for example, liberation theologians obviously had more difficulty expressing their views than at CELAM II, as it was not easy for liberation theologians even to attend the meeting (see Cox 1988). The situation of CELAM IV planned for 1992 in Santo Domingo will surely reflect the same conflicts within the church and the subsequent difficulty liberation theologians have in making their views official during these conferences. Therefore, studying liberation theology on the international level soon may be limited to mere studies of the conflicts liberationists have with other factions of the church. Any study of particular aspects of the movement, such as treatment of women's issues and the image of woman, is therefore best treated in relation to an expression of liberation theology in a particular country, as it is there where liberation theologians have a greater freedom of expression. This

Domingo, The Dominican Republic, in 1992.

thesis focuses upon the liberation theology movement in Peru.

I have chosen the Peruvian context for two reasons. As the Peruvian priest and theologian, Gustavo Gutiérrez, is recognized as one of leaders of the movement on the international level, having unofficially started the movement when he coined the term "liberation theology," I suggest that the Peruvian expression of liberation theology may prove to be one of the richest in all of Latin America. Secondly, and on a mere practical level, it is in Peru that I have connections within the liberation theology movement. I studied and observed the movement first hand while I lived in Lima, Peru from July, 1989 until May, 1990 and in February and March, 1991.

Wherever liberation theology is found it is difficult to identify the groups of people who support the movement. In many ways the best liberation theology that is done in Peru or in any Latin American country is not written, as it is done when the poor themselves reflect upon their active commitment to one another. The followers of liberation theology are born the moment they begin to take the perspective of the poor from the basis of the Christian conviction to love their neighbour. The extent of this commitment varies from one person to the next, as people's new theological outlook often contains vestiges of the fatalism and the hierarchical structure of the church

characteristic of pre-conciliar theology. Regardless of their level of commitment to the poor, however, common liberation theologians do not normally publish their theological reflections made in small grassroots organizations. The poor people in these grassroots organizations are often illiterate and rarely have connections with publishing houses. The movement is therefore dependent upon interpretations of the poor's reality by educated priests and lay workers who have chosen to work and live amongst the poor in order to take on the poor's perspective.

Despite this definite and necessary obstacle, it is possible to identify liberation theology in Peru through certain centres recognized as expressing the "option for the poor" and the "theology as second step" fundamentals characteristic of the movement. These are the Instituto Bartolomé de Las Casas in Cusco and the Instituto Bartolomé de Las Casas in Lima where Gustavo Gutiérrez works. Both organizations publish a journal, Allpanchis being the journal publication from the Andes, and Páginas the journal from the coast. The publishing house, CEP (Centro de Estudios y Publicaciones) works closely with both Institutos Bartolomé de Las Casas and is recognized as a supporter of liberation theology. For the purposes of this thesis, liberation theology will be approached in part through the

body of texts published by either one of the journals or by CEP.

I do not wish to state that the expression of liberation theology in Peru is exemplary of liberation theology in Latin America as a whole. Instead, I propose that it is impossible to speak of Latin American liberation theology in general without considering numerous case studies of particular expressions of the movement. Essentially, I am questioning the notion that there is an organization of "liberation theology" on the international level, as by its very nature (the value it gives to experience) liberation theology seems to uphold particularities as opposed to generalities. Although study of the international expression of liberation theology is useful in some circumstances, this broader view is limited, and for the purposes of this thesis, it is inadequate. The questions raised by this thesis can be answered only in terms of studies of the movement in several settings. Because I was not able to spend time in several Latin American countries (a course of study which could last up to a decade), I am limited to conclusions based on the one Peruvian case study.

3. The Emergence of Liberation Theology in Peru

Jeffrey Klaiber, a church historian living and teaching in Peru for over twenty years, perceives the Peruvian church to have undergone three distinct developmental phases from 1955-1980: 1) the "Modern Church" (1955-1968); 2) the "Political Church" (1968-1980); and 3) the "Pastoral Church" (1975-1980).⁷ All of these phases in the Peruvian church's history Klaiber marks by political events either inside or outside the church, as the divisions correspond to the 1955 ordination of Juan Landazuri Ricketts as Archbishop of Lima, the 1968 coup d'etat by General Juan Velasco Alvarado, the 1975 take over by General Francisco Morales Bermudez, and the 1980 reinstatement of the electoral process in the country.⁸

⁷ Klaiber outlines these divisions in Chapters 8, 9, and 10 of La Iglesia en el Peru (1988).

⁸ In Iglesia en el Perú, Compromiso y Renovación (1958-1984), Catalina Romero presents the emergence of liberation theology in the history of the Peruvian church in a slightly different manner. For Romero, the Peruvian church's modern history is divided into two basic phases. The first phase (1958-1968) is a time when the church distanced itself from those with whom it previously had been so closely aligned, the ruling classes and the oligarchy. The church in this period became aware of social issues, causing it to question the relation it had with the country's powerful, as well as the relation the powerful had with the poor classes (Romero 1987: 11). After this ten year period, the church firmly decided to show solidarity with the poor, first in the years 1968-1973 in the ways it participated in the rapid changes in society, and then in the years 1973-1978 through its work in grassroots organization. Romero's analysis also differs from Klaiber's in that she does not emphasize the importance of particular persons such as Landazuri Ricketts and Gutiérrez, but rather stresses the way

1955-1968: The Modern Church

The Modern Church, according to Klaiber, was influenced by the "Alliance for Progress"⁹ supported by U.S. President Kennedy, which manifested itself in the construction of many churches and the abundance of development projects. These material changes in Peruvian society were complemented by a series of value changes. The modernization process, Klaiber writes, brought with it the values of the occidental democratic world, values such as efficiency, rational planning, pluralism, intellectual criticism, and liberalism (Klaiber 1987: 335,337).

The ordination of Landazuri Ricketts as Archbishop of Lima is, for Klaiber, the beginning of this modern era, as he views Landazuri's attempt to renovate and reorganize the ecclesial organism as a major factor in the acceleration of the modernization process in the Peruvian church. Specifically, Klaiber identifies Landazuri's creation of new ecclesial offices as a key factor in favour of modernization, as it was through these offices that the church was capable of serving the needs of the people with greater efficiency.

Klaiber notes how the promoters of the new church in Peru were priests both Peruvian and foreign who had brought

the church's lay people change.

⁹ "... the Alliance for Progress made aid contingent upon recipients instituting certain specific policies, which were called reforms ... (Schoultz 1981: 189)."

new ideas into the country from their education in the most progressive schools in Europe and North American (337). Peruvian priests such as Gutiérrez, the Alvarez Calderón brothers, and others who helped develop liberation theology, received part or all of their education in Europe or North America. Missionaries arriving during this period had received an education more liberal than those who had previously arrived and were inspired to live with and work more closely to the poor. In Klaiber's opinion, their desire to live with the poor not only changed the image of the church by way of their presence in the poor regions, but it also changed the mentality of the priests themselves, as they became increasingly more interested in social issues the longer they lived with the poor (338).

Klaiber gives credit to key people in the hierarchy, universities and popular organizations for creating a new way of working with people, and subsequently a new positive image of the church. Landazuri Ricketts is, according to Klaiber, one of the key figures in this process of change. Even though Landazuri was automatically named the Primate of the Peruvian Church due to his position as Archbishop, it was not obligatory for him to take on the role of President of the Peruvian Episcopate. By holding the two roles simultaneously, Landazuri Ricketts became known as the leader of the Peruvian church both inside and outside the country, writes Klaiber (345). Klaiber attributes the rapid

maturing of the Peruvian church to Landazuri's ability to lead the church in a manner through which all factions of the church were capable of finding a common ground. It is due to Landazuri's talent in enhancing dialogue between opposing groups that the Peruvian church, in Klaiber's view, did not pass through major crises as have other Latin American churches in the times of Vatican II, Medellín, and Puebla (345).

In this atmosphere of "modernity," the Peruvian Episcopal Conference in January of 1958 met, and produced a pastoral letter. Catalina Romero, a Peruvian sociologist working out of the Instituto Bartolomé de Las Casas, agrees with Klaiber's assessment that this letter was the first truly social letter in the history of the Peruvian church (Klaiber 1987: 337; Romero 1987:12). The letter was followed by two Social Weeks which were aimed at accelerating social consciousness amongst lay people and clergy alike. The Social Weeks encouraged a kind of mysticism which Klaiber identifies as the "call for all Christians to change the world" (337).

Also significant for Klaiber is the presence of the Christian Democratic Party (PDC) in the political realm. According to Klaiber the PDC represents a new type of Christian in Peru: the modern person who has a good professional formation and a marked social consciousness. Klaiber notes how in Peruvian history Christians held the

opinion that political life is sordid and immoral. With the development of the PDC, he writes, this attitude changed. The PDC possessed an intellectual formation that was, in Klaiber's view, often better than the formation of Peruvian priests. In the end Klaiber perceives the PDC as performing an important role in the process of maturity in the church as it represents the first vehicle for disseminating the ideas of social Christianity outside the institutional church, even though these ideas would extend beyond the boundaries of the PDC party in the following years.

1968-1975: The Political Church

Under the military reign of Juan Velasco Alvarado, the Peruvian church, in Klaiber's words, became the model of the church in all of Latin America (377). Supported by Vatican II and the Encyclicals of Popes John XXIII and Paul VI, the Peruvian church in both the lay and clerical sectors began to involve itself in Peruvian political life. The church's involvement in politics was given intellectual support by Gutiérrez's liberation theology, writes Klaiber (378). During this time, in Klaiber's view, the church is best characterized by three terms representative of the liberation theology movement: "concientization," "liberalization," and "development."

The 1968 CELAM meeting at Medellín was an event, in Klaiber's view, which represented the formation of a new

identity for the church and a break with the powerful classes. After Medellín the church took on the role of defender of human rights. Klaiber characterizes Medellín as representing the ideas of only a few select clergy. Likewise Klaiber states that the clerical group, ONIS, formed as a social analysis group, represented only the thought of a select group of clergy.¹⁰ ONIS along with individual priests directly contributed to the reforms of the Velasco government as it made direct pronouncements in favour of certain reforms through pastoral letters and newspaper publications.

After 1971, the church was one of the remaining institutions capable of denouncing the violations of human rights as the press was becoming increasingly censored. Klaiber identifies the church from 1973 on as openly opposed to the Velasco government as human rights violations escalated, and as it became clear that the government did not sincerely desire to represent the needs of the poor. In her analysis of Peruvian church history, Catalina Romero states that the Peruvian church began to concentrate upon grassroots organizations around 1973 when it became obvious that Velasco had ceased to represent the desires of the common classes (Romero 1987: 27).

¹⁰ ONIS stands for National Office for Social Information.

1975-1980

Klaiber attributes the movement from the Political to the Pastoral Phases to the frustrations the church experienced under the Velasco rule. The loss of hope in the political process, writes Klaiber, led the church to an alternate means by which to change society, this time in the form of pastoral work. The relation between the church and state during the rule of Morales Bermudez is, according to Klaiber's study, much more ambiguous than in the previous years because the church expressed itself further away from the public eye. The church, writes Klaiber, tolerated Morales Bermudez's rule without making many direct condemnations of it, because Morales had promised to reinstate the electoral process at the end of his five year rule.

During this time liberation theology became influential world-wide and was subject to a great deal of criticism. On the national level, Klaiber identifies this time as a time which liberation theology was working effectively in grassroots organizations, fulfilling the manner in which it was meant to express itself. Liberation theology, in Klaiber's view, then worked in a manner which was neither dogmatic nor sectarian (482). It became more of a natural process of theology making by people in poor areas of the country.

The Present Day Peruvian Church

The results of the recent national election in April, 1990, both reflect and reinforce the Peruvian populace's distrust of official politics. Despite the elaborate campaign of the right wing coalition party, FREDEMO (Frente Democratico), costing nearly 70 million dollars, Peruvians voted for Alberto Fujimori's party, Cambio 90. Two weeks before the election Fujimori was a virtual unknown. His political stance was ambiguous except for the fact that he promised not to implement the economic "shock" strategy proposed by the FREDEMO party. Out of apathy, it seems, the Peruvian populace voted Fujimori to power, (voting is mandatory and failure to do so is recognized as support for the rebel groups, Shining Path and the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement). Regardless of his promise, however, Fujimori implemented an economic strategy similar to the one proposed by Mario Vargas Llosa¹¹ within a month of his inauguration.

Today in Peru there appears to be no official political option that is capable of representing the interests of the majority of the people in the country. With the price of goods and services often comparable to prices in North

¹¹ Mario Vargas Llosa is a renown author from the aristocratic Peruvian city, Arequipa. Although he has had little experience in politics prior to the April, 1990 electoral campaign, his party was not viewed as independent because many of the members of the coalition were well experienced Peruvian politicians.

America, the people must concentrate solely upon survival. The two left parties, the Izquierda Unida (United Left) and the Izquierda Socialista (Socialist Left) formed one party until shortly before the election. Many people told me before the election, that the problem with the United Left was that it was not united. With increased terrorist activity and no fewer human rights violations by the military, the people are, as Amnesty International puts it, caught "between two flames" (Amnesty International 1989).

Liberation theologians reflect this despair in their texts as they concentrate primarily upon the image of "The God of Life," in response to the question: how can we believe in a God of Life when all we can see is death? Bishop Germán Schmitz best reflected the attitude of the present day Peruvian liberation theology movement in his discourse to Pope John Paul II in 1985:

"Holy Father, we are hungry. We suffer misery, we are unemployed, we are sick. With hearts broken with pain, we see that our spouses fight tuberculosis, our babies die, and our children grow weak and without a future. But, in spite of it all, we believe in a God of life" (my translation).¹²

¹² Santo Padre, tenemos hambre. Sufrimos miseria, nos falta trabajo, estamos enfermos. Con el corazón roto por el dolor, vemos que nuestras esposas gestan en la tuberculosis, nuestros niños mueren, nuestros hijos crecen débiles y sin futuro. Pero, a pesar de todo esto, creemos en el Dios de la vida (Gutiérrez 1989: 14).

Conclusions

The experience-based methodology proposed by liberation theology has elicited criticism from certain conservative factions within the church. At the same time, however, it has been supported by various other sub-groups within the Christian community, such as black and feminist theologians from North America. The perspectives of such groups are quite similar as they all represent those who traditionally have not been considered in the official church's talk about God. These minority groups challenge the church's status quo, as they all take the perspective of the powerless, making theology from what Gutiérrez refers to as "the underside of history."

It is questionable, however, if liberation theologians have adopted a truly feminist perspective. In a footnote of the final documents of the 1979 CELAM III meeting held in Puebla, Mexico, liberation theologians managed to include the statement that women are amongst those who are doubly oppressed, whereas women are not mentioned at all in the 1968 CELAM II documents. The majority of texts produced by liberation theologians since this time have not given women's concerns attention, however. It is therefore uncertain if liberation theologians take on the perspective of those oppressed due to gender along with that of those oppressed because of class. The extent to which liberation

theologians have responded to feminist theologians' concerns is significant as both groups' work could be strengthened from their joint efforts to combat the church's traditional method of theology-making. On the other hand any failure to address the concerns of women with which they work, or any direct oppression of women by liberation theology, could seriously weaken the support liberation theologians have found outside Latin America. Ultimately, however, if liberation theologians ignore women's concerns in their theological reflections they contradict both their methodology and the "option for the poor" fundamentals of their theology.

CHAPTER ONE

Woman as Mother: Traditional Texts of the Peruvian Church

Apart from arguments concerning the body of woman in relation to the "divine moral law," and explorations of the character of Mary of Nazareth, texts produced by the traditional sector of the Peruvian church do not deal with woman or women's issues.¹³ Moreover, when traditionalists do consider the question of women, their presentation implies a certain understanding of feminine sexuality in relation to sin. As becomes evident through the analysis of a number of Peruvian traditional texts which develop these themes, the understanding of sexuality posited by traditionalist theologians results in a devaluing image of woman, an image which reinforces certain theses as to

¹³ By the "traditional sector of the Peruvian church" I refer to the faction of the Peruvian church that does not support liberation theology. In Peru the journals, La Revista Teológica Limense and VE, Vida y Espiritualidad are known not to support liberation theology. The former President of the Peruvian Episcopal Conference, Ricardo Durand, is also known as an adversary of liberation theology as he published a book criticizing the movement. Durand, and people published by either of the above mentioned journals I identify as belonging to the traditional sector of the Peruvian church. There are a few people, such as historian Jeffrey Klaiber, who cannot be identified as either a traditionalist or a liberationist, as they are published in both traditionalist and liberationist journals.

woman's sexual and reproductive rights. Therefore, in order to ferret out traditionalist Peruvian images of "woman as mother," this chapter explores several mainstream arguments concerning women's reproductive rights, and the figure of Mary of Nazareth as ideal, or model of woman.

This critique of Peruvian traditionalist texts assumes the partiality of church doctrines which are contingent upon the acceptance or rejection of church authority. This authority, especially in relation to body issues, has been challenged by theologians both inside and outside the Roman Catholic church, resulting in an entire movement in theological reflection, feminist theology. It is therefore not necessary, in my view, to qualify my criticisms of these texts' arguments in light of Catholic tradition as the sexist bias of that tradition has been revealed by feminist theologians for nearly thirty years.

1. Woman's Body, Woman's Reality: Deviations from the "Moral Order"

What interests Peruvian traditionalists most about woman is her body. In the conservative journals, La Revista Teologica Limense and VE, articles about women are scarce. In my search through the archives of both journals I did not find one article that deals with women in their struggles to survive the country's crises, women's daily lives in poor

barrios, or women organizing in the church or in the community. It appears that these issues, in the traditionalists' view, are not worthy of theological reflection. Instead, traditionalist authors concentrate upon issues which deal with the literal (biological) body of woman, issues such as abortion, contraception, and sexual conduct, as opposed to issues which depict woman in relation to other people in her community.

The articles in these journals appear to have little content that is distinctly Peruvian. They could be written just as well in any other country, and at times seem more suitable for cultural, political and socio-economic situations much different from Peru, as they do not always reflect the injustices from which the majority of Peruvians suffer (see Doig 1987). This may be due to the traditionalists' assumption (made evident in their advocacy of a "divine moral order") that people create theology or "talk about God" apart from their daily experience. Peruvian traditionalists' methodology maintains a sharp distinction between what comes from God, and humans' interaction with one another in the world. Inspiration is therefore best achieved through acts such as meditation, prayer, or listening to one's "inner voice," as opposed to active life in community (Doig 1987: 60-61; Interdonato 1980: 5-7). Daily life experiences are thus posited as less valuable than introspective expressions of spirituality and,

in certain circumstances, especially those involving sexual expression, are considered sinful. According to traditionalist Ricardo Durand, for example, faith is defined as "acceptance of God's will" (1989: 19), an act which ultimately requires people's submission to a divine moral law expressed as the conscience or the inner voice of the person (see Doig 1987: 65; Interdonato 1980: 3). In practice the "moral law" amounts to a legalistic set of rules which are considered to be innate, and capable of surpassing cultural and political differences.

Specific issues such as birth control, abortion, and sexual behaviour are topics of interest to these authors, as they are questions to which the divine moral law answers. A definitive and unchanging truth concerning these issues, in traditionalist's opinion, is within human grasp. According to traditionalist authors, theology is not made and re-made in an ever changing way such as the liberationists propose, but rather is based upon an utterly static and accessible natural law. Their method of doing theology therefore encourages people to develop as individuals who obey the divine natural law, rather than developing their relationship with the divine through reflection upon their commitment to the poor.

In contrast to the traditionalists, liberation theologians generally ignore the issues that concern woman's body and concentrate upon issues involving women within a

community. Reproductive rights, sexual conduct, and Mary's biological virginity are rarely mentioned in the liberationist journals, Páginas and Allpanchis. It is only recently that women from the Instituto Bartolomé de Las Casas have dealt with sexuality in the study, "Reflexion Sobre La Sexualidad." This study presents sexuality as an integral part of people's being and focuses less upon sexual conduct than do traditionalist writings. Sexuality, according to the liberationist authors, is a complex way of being which is affected by and, in turn, affects social relations. The focus here corresponds to liberation theologians' concern for class struggle, and indeed, liberation theology's overall approach to women's issues reflects the belief that theology is best done from the basis of experience. Its method is therefore directly in conflict with the traditionalists' emphasis on norms. Traditionalist texts ignore women's poverty, women's hardships in the countryside, women's fight for survival in the cities, and those situations generally which cause women to suffer, either in society or in the church, as they often ignore the reality of class struggle overall. The traditionalists' "divine moral law" appears to be limited to personal issues as it does not have solutions to the larger social issues, nor does it even recognize that social problems exist. Whereas liberation theologians look "down" to God living amongst the poor and look inward to reflect

upon their experiences with the poor in light of their belief to love their neighbour¹⁴, traditionalists choose to look inward and "upward" to God in the "heavens."

2. Woman's Body: Egotism and Sexual Pleasure

In the article, "La Planificación Natural: Su Validez Etica y Moral," Enrique Bartra argues along traditionalist lines that the rhythm method is the only contraceptive method that is in accordance with the God's will. Bartra bases his argument upon the assumption that a "moral law" or a "moral order" is written on each person's "heart."¹⁵ This law, states Bartra, teaches people how to treat themselves and also how to interact with one another¹⁶ and

¹⁴ Liberationists' approach tries not to be conflictual, as if they would like to ignore that there are really two faces, if not more, to the Peruvian church. Many times, for example, my professor, Francisco Moreno Rejón, cautioned me not to state that there are two sides to the church in Peru. After living in the country for twelve months and interacting with religious from three congregations, however, it became evident to me that there indeed are two sides to the church, two main bodies which are trying to maintain and advance their opinions and perspectives.

¹⁵ Bartra quotes Gaudium et Spes when defining this moral law or order as "... una ley escrito por Dios en su corazón," "... a law written on his/her heart by God," (my translation).

¹⁶ It is obvious that Bartra does not mean that the moral law is capable of instructing how people interact with one another in community or even in the family as he does not deal with such social issues. What Bartra means here is that the moral law is capable of governing people's sexual interactions with one another.

also instructs people that the only form of birth control that is condoned by God is a form which leaves open the possibility of procreation (Bartra 1988: 328).

Bartra's interpretation of the moral law regarding sexuality focuses upon sexual relations and pleasure. He condemns sensual pleasure apart from the responsibility of child bearing and rearing, equating pleasure with egotism. Without the possibility of conception, Bartra writes, the sexual act becomes egotistical as it is centred upon erotic pleasure alone (1988: 334). A person's sexual conduct is, in his view, capable of affecting his/her soul as he believes that human sexuality, unlike animal's sexuality, is something that can affect one's spiritual state.

Nothing is lost when a couple refrains from sexual relations, in Bartra's view, as he clearly sees that nothing profound, apart from children, can be gained through them (335). Bartra quotes Pope John Paul II's statement regarding sexual abstinence made when John Paul was still an Archbishop. Nothing is lost, says the former Archbishop, in temporal abstinence from sexual relations. In fact, Bartra cites John Paul as saying that the union of two people is made stronger through sexual abstinence as this affirms the value of the person as opposed to the attachment to sensuality (Bartra 1988: 335). By this estimation, sexual pleasure is portrayed as implicitly egotistical and therefore, as inherently evil.

Although Bartra claims to be voicing the dictates of the moral order rather than speaking from his own experience, he and other people in positions of power in the Peruvian church speak of issues concerning family solely from a traditional and doctrinal perspective. They have no personal experience with making a family, and, most likely, they also lack experience of the sexual relations about which they speak. By refraining from sexual relations the married couple simulates the life of clergy: in essence Bartra offers his celibate lifestyle as the marital ideal.

One thing Bartra certainly is idealistic about is women's menstrual cycles. Although he is certainly supported in his view by the official teachings of the Roman Catholic church, his argument concerning the rhythm method presupposes that women have a regular cycle of no less than 28 days, that they never ovulate more than once a month, and that their menstrual cycles are never affected by factors such as tension, or change of diet. Bartra states that sexual relations must always be open to conception but ignores the reality that some women are more apt to become pregnant than others. For example, women with shorter menstrual cycles have fewer days during their cycle when they are apparently infertile. A woman who has a cycle of 21 days or less can possibly become pregnant while she is menstruating due to the length of time sperm live within the body and the amount of time needed for the fertilized ovum

to reach the uterus. Also, poor women are apt to have more stress-filled days than rich women, as they daily encounter new impediments to their families' survival. The rhythm method therefore appears more suitable to some women than to others, and more disadvantageous to poor than to wealthy women.

Moreover, Bartra does not consider the fact that, apart from sterilization, no contraceptive method can completely prevent conception. Even sterilization is not always effective. Since all methods of contraception leave open the possibility for conception, they would appear, by Bartra's own definition, to be measures which are in keeping with the supposed divine moral law. Although he refers to the rhythm method as a "natural" method, he again does not consider its practical application. Bartra also does not explain why he distinguishes between "natural" and "artificial" in the way that he does, as he does not explain why he believes the method is any more "natural" than condoms, for example. Bartra appears to assume that his argument's compatibility with church tradition is sufficient support for his argument, for the argument he asserts is reinforced by the official teaching of the Roman Catholic church.¹⁷

¹⁷ See Noonan, 1965, for a history of church teaching regarding contraception, as well as for an overview of controversy surrounding traditional teaching between 1750 and 1965. See also Noonan, 1980, for an example of Noonan's own faithfulness to traditional teaching. Noonan is offered here

Because it is the least effective method of birth control, advocacy of the rhythm method discourages people from taking control over their own lives. Both men and women using the rhythm method are subject to many variables beyond their control and are thus condemned to accept the dictates of women's hormonal changes. Lack of control over family size, and therefore, over economic and emotional responsibilities is a very significant factor for all people, and especially for poor people. Though Bartra states that all sexual relations between people should leave open the possibility of creating life, economic crises caused by the inability to raise children hardly can be considered life giving. Bartra does not consider that "life giving" cannot always be taken literally. His argument also does not consider the circumstances in which many women live in their own homes where they are raped by their partners, and where they face partners who are uncooperative in implementing the rhythm method. Despite the positing of such an ideal, or a "divine moral law," relationships between men and women do not benefit from this abstract norm as the men and women, themselves, do not always correspond to what the moral law states they should be.

as only one example of theological conformity to traditional church teaching, an example which suggests that Bartra is not alone in his interpretation of the morality of contraception and that what is followed in Peru as traditionalist doctrine is also asserted outside the Latin American context.

In various ways, Bartra does not consider the life experiences of the majority of people in the society in which he lives. He tries to give further support to the rhythm method by stating that alternative types of birth control are often expensive (1988: 334). This argument reflects Bartra's ignorance of raising a family and life in general, as any person with any experience raising children or with any experience living close to those with children would know that the cost of raising children is much higher than the cost of any method of birth control.

Sexual pleasure, according to Bartra, is a necessary evil associated with child bearing and rearing. His insistence that sexual relations must be open to procreation implies that the burden of responsibility of children and parenthood acts as a purifying compensation for the egotism of sexual pleasure. Bartra's argument reflects his own opinions concerning human relationships, women's bodies, spirituality, and sinfulness. He overlooks his surroundings and sacralizes his opinions by claiming that they are the "moral order" or "moral law." It seems peculiar that this "moral law" which is supposed to be written on each person's heart, bears little relation to the world in which Peruvian people live, and offers little or no support to people who

desire to become active agents of change in their own personal lives and in the life of their community.¹⁸

3. The Problem of Abortion: Women Who Murder

In his arguments concerning abortion, Francisco Interdonato also proposes the existence of "a natural moral order." He states that any normal person knows what the good is that s/he must do, and the bad that s/he must avoid (Interdonato 1980: 5). He refers to human's "ethical instinct" which transmits the natural law. The morality taught by the church, he continues, is inspired by the truth and not by fashions (7). Like Bartra, Interdonato believes that the church has a special ability to know an ideal of human relations, that the moral law is thus "knowable" and somehow innate and unchanging. Also like Bartra, Interdonato states that humans are different from animals, as they are not meant to kill one another as animals do. To kill is to go against the moral law and become like an animal, states Interdonato; it is a crime. Women who chose

¹⁸ As indicated in footnote #17, the Peruvian theological situation is not unique. Bartra's conformity to natural law must be situated within the tradition of Roman Catholic sexual ethics. Noonan 1965 offers some discussion of the challenges to this tradition up to 1965. For literature on more recent challenges to traditional Roman Catholic ethics, see for example, McCormick and Curran, editors, 1988, and especially with regards to woman, the writings of Ruether, 1969, 1974, and Daly, 1973.

to abort, in Interdonato's view, are assassins, morally less than human (8).

One thing that is most unfortunate about these traditionalist articles is that they discourage people from thinking for themselves. Although it is unlikely that poor people will read these articles, priests working with poor people read them and may use these arguments in their work with poor people. As these views have the greater portion of church history in support of them, their arguments are easily accepted by priests and lay people who have not been concientized to challenge the norm, however oppressive it is to them. Moreover, because of these men's political connections within the church they are able to be published in a leading Peruvian journal despite the numerous flaws in their arguments.

Given Interdonato's assumption that a moral order exists, it is not surprising that he considers abortion to be against that order, as abortion is traditionally not accepted by the official Catholic church. Interdonato assumes that a foetus is, from the moment of its conception, a human being (1980: 11). Given this assumption it is not surprising that he concludes that to kill a foetus, an "innocent human being," is against the moral order (8).

The language that Interdonato uses in this article, reflects his moral point of view. He speaks of the problem of abortion, as opposed to the issues or debate concerning

abortion and thereby closes off all possibility for opinions contradicting his own. Abortion is not, in his words, the interruption of a pregnancy, but rather the murder of a foetus (10). He uses harsh accusing words such as assassination and crime when referring to the act of abortion and states that women who abort are like animals. The foetus, in his words, is innocent, and therefore must be protected from people's egotism. In the end, he condemns women who abort as sinful, criminal, and animals.

Interdonato believes that abortions are a result of the modern world.¹⁹ The birth control pill has lead to the lack of morality in the sexual act, as well as to the women's liberation movement, he writes (1988: 226). He also states that it is not true that women are the "owners of their bodies," who have the right to control them.(10) Here Interdonato states that opposed to being "owners of their bodies" women are "custodians" of the unborn (227). Women's liberation does not mean, in his view, liberty to kill and oppress, but rather the liberty not to abort (228). Evoking

¹⁹ Interdonato does not consider that women living in the Andes have provoked abortions for a long time even though they have not been affected by the western women's liberation movement. In 1985 when I was living in the Canchamalca, a village of 300 people six hours outside of Huancayo, Peru, I did a project on the people's belief in natural medicine. Women from the village told me that if a woman kills a pregnant sheep and drinks the embryonic fluid she will abort. The Goddess of abortions, sexual pleasure and fertility, Tlazolteotl, adored by the Aztec peoples is an example that abortions are not an occurrence only of the modern world (see Marcos 1989: 24).

liberationist phraseology, he states that it is not a true "preferential option for the poor" to give the poor the ability to oppress just as they have been oppressed by the rich (232).²⁰

Most disconcerting for me about Interdonato's argument is its dependence on ill-founded information and its dispersal of unrealistic advice. For example, he states that he does not believe that fewer women die from abortions given in medical clinics as opposed to those who have abortions in clandestine places (230). Such a statement is not only obviously ill-founded, but also discourages women from searching out the few adequate medical services available to them, instilling in them an unnecessary fear of the medical procedure. Secondly, Interdonato advises that people should try to prevent abortions (233). He offers a few suggestions as to the prevention of conception of unwanted foetuses, among which are combating the hedonistic conceptions and egotism in life (a direct reference to the sexual act itself and the view that sexual relations are sinful), and facilitating the means for people to adopt (235). Interdonato's first suggestion reflects his affirmation of a Bartran attitude toward sexuality which has already been criticized. His latter suggestion also affirms

²⁰ Liberation theology has not yet dealt with reproductive rights but this statement by the traditionalist indicates that liberation theologians would be confronted by the traditional sector of the church if they supported reproductive rights.

Bartra's argument concerning birth control methods, which are, as already stated, impractical for the majority of women. Bartra's and Interdonato's arguments are almost identical in that they conform to church doctrine, and prescribe that all people, and especially women, do not challenge norms established by the official voice of the Roman Catholic church.²¹

4. The Importance of Mary's Biological Virginity

In the article, "La Perpetua Virginidad de María en el Pensamiento de San Agustín," Alejandro Saavedra outlines and affirms Augustine's argument that Mary of Nazareth's hymen remained intact after the birth of Jesus. Saavedra argues that the all powerful God can do anything. It is therefore not impossible that Mary's hymen was left intact after the birth of Jesus (65). Why theologians would be so concerned with Mary's hymen, her biological virginity, is questionable, however.

For Saavedra, it appears that there is a strong correlation between Mary's sanctity and her hymen.²²

²¹ These doctrines are outlined in texts referred to in footnote #17.

²² A significant amount of literature has developed, especially in recent years, which examines the doctrinal history of this correlation and the implications the correlation has for sexual ethics, theology of body, and the liberation of women. I cannot offer an overview of this literature here, but the reader might consult Raymond Brown, 1973, for a discussion of

Mary's physical body seems to confirm the status of her purity. Saavedra implies that the absence of the membrane would result in sinfulness and "lack of dignity" both for Mary and Jesus:

... the perpetual virginity of Mary is intimately linked to the dignity of the Son of God ... (my translation)..²³

There is a strong link, in Saavedra's opinion, between Mary's faith and her virginal body. He quotes the Bishop of Hipona statement that virginity is the faith intact, solid hope and sincere charity, as this "intact faith" or "intact hymen" is linked with Jesus' own sanctity (68). If her "physical integrity" was not intact after she gave birth, Jesus could not rightfully be said to be "born of a virgin" (64). It is not only that the maintenance of Mary's hymen results from her purity, but rather that the two factors, hymen and purity, are so interconnected that the absence of hymen is capable of affecting Mary's spirituality to the same extent that her spirituality affects her hymen.

The importance Saavedra places on Mary's body implies the same understanding of sexuality as expressed in the

scriptural and early church teaching on Mary's virginity; John Bugge, 1975, for a discussion of the development of the focus on Mary's biological virginity from the early church fathers into the Middle Ages; and Janet Nelson, 1977-8, for an overview of recent, including some feminist, critiques of the focus on Mary's biological virginity.

²³ "... la perpetua virginidad de María está estrechamente relacionada con la dignidad del Hijo de Dios ... (Saavedra 1988: 70)."

Bartra and Interdonato articles, namely, that sexual pleasure equates to egotism. However, Saavedra expands upon this argument by placing the image of Mary in relation to Eve. Saavedra writes: "Death comes from woman, life comes from woman (my translation)." ²⁴ These two images of woman, one evil, the other good, are typified for Saavedra in the characters Eve and Mary of Nazareth. The Virgin Mary, writes Saavedra, offers the possibility of life to fallen womankind, both corporally and spiritually. Here sexuality is equated with sinfulness once again, and Mary's virginity proves central to her role as intercessor. His argument does not challenge traditional understandings of the relationship between Eve and Mary as he affirms reflections made by several church fathers. Saavedra thereby affirms past church doctrine concerning the relationship between Eve and Mary, the sinfulness of sexuality, and the necessity of Mary's perpetual virginity.

5. Mary as Mother: Her Faithful Acceptance of God's Will

In the article, "María, Madre de Dios y Madre de la Iglesia," the former President of the Peruvian Episcopal

²⁴ "Por la mujer viene la muerte, por la mujer viene la vida (70)." The images of Mary and Eve are depicted here as two types of mothers, one the mother of death and the other the mother of life, as the verb "venir" (to come/become), suggests that death and life passed through these women or was brought about through them.

Conference, Ricardo Durand, explores the image of Mary both as mother of God and mother of the church. It is in her motherhood, Durand states, that Mary is a model for the life of the church (Durand 1989: 17). Durand's argument is based upon the assumption that faith in God is something that is a gift from God that one must receive (19). Durand makes a distinction between divine faith and human faith stating that divine faith "... is something far beyond our nature," (my translation).²⁵

Though Durand does not say so directly, this acceptance of God's will in faith, appears to reinforce Bartra's and Interdonato's arguments concerning the "moral law of God." According to these authors and Durand, faith is something that must be received in a passive way. This will of God or "moral law" does not always correspond to earthly realities. Human experience in the world, human needs and desires, are thereby subjugated to an inferior status, as they must be resigned in order to accept the will of the Other, God.

The moral order or law depicted in Durand's, Bartra's and Interdonato's articles reflects their theological focus. For liberation theologians, the moral order calls one to love one's neighbour, is something very close to the daily life experience, and is defined only by a faithful analysis of that life experience, meaning an active commitment to the poor as faith is expressed and reinforced by life

²⁵ "... es algo que está más allá de nuestra naturaleza. (19)".

experiences. Durand's definition of faith and acceptance of the divine will is rather vague but he does describe people who do not have a strong relationship to God. Durand equates divorce, abortion, and euthanasia with loss of respect for people's dignity (18). The emphasis here is clearly not placed on class struggle and unjust systems and structures, but on personal adherence to a set of rules, or to the "moral law." Durand believes specific moral acts, especially sexual acts conflict with human dignity, and does not mention the grand injustices that cause hunger, unemployment, and incredibly low wages, and inflation. This emphasis reflects Durand's focus on introspective expressions of religiosity and his desire not to question what the official church has not challenged in the past. By equating abortion, for example, as a situation in which there has been loss of respect for life, Durand does not condemn that which may have led to the necessity for an abortion. Rather, he condemns the abortion itself. Regardless of whether or not abortion, divorce, and euthanasia can be considered injustices in themselves, they can be better understood when the context of what causes them to occur is considered. Durand does not consider that there may be an injustice of equal importance to divorce or abortion, for example, that causes people to divorce one another or to choose to abort.

For Durand, moreover, Mary of Nazareth, the Virgin Mary, the model of woman as faithful and obedient, is an ideal for the entire church (20), not only because of her own immaculate conception (15), but also because of her physical and perpetual virginity (16). This emphasis on Mary's body echoes the sentiments expressed in the Saavedra article, where Mary's unbreakable hymen legitimizes her motherhood of the divine, as her virginal maternity is the way in which humankind is reconciled with God (16).

Completely dependent upon the literal manifestations of the acceptance of God's will in her body, Mary as virgin achieves a status approaching divinity, albeit short of it. She is mother of both of Jesus' natures, human and divine, and is therefore capable of mothering the entire church, but she is only capable of this motherhood because of the physical manifestation of her obedience to God in her biological virginity. Although Mary brings hope of new life she is not a saviour or liberator, but rather only mother as a virgin. Durand does not describe how women can actually follow this example of motherhood : the literalness of Mary's body seems so important, yet so distant from the common woman in the Peruvian church. Apart from certain moral rules established by the official church over the years, Durand's definition of the acceptance of God's will appears to be a simple acceptance of fate. Problems in the

world today, he states, are due to agnosticism, divorce, and abortion; the distancing between God and the world.

6. Mary, Woman of Silence

Perhaps one of the most revealing articles written by a supporter of the conservative faction of the Peruvian church is the article, "María, La Mujer del Silencio," written by Germán Doig. Doig argues that in the world in which we live today, people are losing silence. According to Doig, we live in a culture of noise:

... man at present is sick with noise; he suffers from the noise of the streets, but above everything he suffers from the noise that has penetrated his very being" (my translation).²⁶

Doig's analysis is based upon the assumption that noise is a problem in itself, as he does not appear interested in examining the reasons why the noise exists. According to Doig, people should rediscover the silence that they have lost (50). By doing this people will "... recuperate the essence/sense of life, (my translation)"²⁷ as the human being/spirit is most effected by this lack of silence. This argument overlooks the reality of oppression which causes many Latin American people to create noise. For example,

²⁶ "... [E]l hombre actual está enfermo de ruido; sufre de la bulla de las calles, pero sobre todo padece por el ruido que ha penetrado dentro de él mismo" (Doig 1987: 49).

²⁷ "... recuperar el sentido de vida".

the noise of Lima's core area is caused mostly by unemployment, lack of transportation services, lack of adequate vehicles for transportation, robberies due to economic crisis, etc... . Doig's advocacy that people rediscover silence amounts to recommending that people suffer their oppressive states silently. Doig implies that the noise is worse than the reason for the noise.

Doig presents Mary as the model of silence. The small amount of information about Mary in the Bible, according to Doig, is a profound reflection upon her character (54). Doig states that there is not much written about Mary, as not many words recorded in the Bible which are hers. She is therefore a silent woman, he writes (55). This silence is not to be perceived as a "... mere absence, but rather as a profound presence, ... (my translation)"²⁸ from which she learned fidelity to God and to humanity (59). Although Doig says it is through silence that people learn about God, this way of knowing about God does not support those who wish to survive the reality of Peru. Instead, Doig's advocacy of silence is blatantly supportive of oppressive societal structures and attitudes.

²⁸ "... mera ausencia, sino como presencia plena, ... (57)".

Conclusions

The enjoyment of sexual pleasure, the desire for sexual relations which are not procreative, and control over reproduction are, in these men's view, deviations from the established norms of the church (identified by these men as the moral order or moral law). Motherhood is inevitable for any woman who is sexually active, as it is not right, in these men's view, for woman to control their body's reproductive potential. Any woman who is obedient to the dictates of the moral law is therefore either virgin or mother. As Mary's maternity and virginity saved womankind from Eve's egotism, so will motherhood save woman from her undignified stature of hymen-lessness. Ultimately, the burden of childbirth and child rearing cleanses woman's spiritual state tarnished by her lost hymen, although woman is not cleansed completely as she can never be virgin and mother simultaneously, like Mary.

These authors' emphasis on the body, both Mary's and woman's, combined with their apparent ignorance of bodily functions and of the social circumstances in which bodies live, results in the objectification of woman and of Mary. Both woman and Mary's actions are dictated by the "divine moral law," a law which is said to supersede the realities of daily life both in Mary's day and in today's society. However, more accurately, it reflects the experience or lack

of experience of the authors. The rigidity of these norms forces women to fit into the mould established by the church, or to be labelled as sinful, and is thus essentially an image by which women are shown conditional acceptance and controlled by church doctrine.

Woman as mother is the passive receiver of a moral order which seemingly "falls from the sky." Like Mary, woman as mother is the faith-filled mother, not in the active sense of the word expressed by liberation theologians (see Chapter Two), but in the passive sense of accepting a will other than her own: she is essentially obedient, the woman of silence. The image of woman as mother in these texts does not challenge the oppressive norms of society, but rather sacralizes them, as the dictates of woman's body and of society in general are accepted without questioning.

These issues are not, however, accepted without questioning by feminist theologians. These issues concerning both woman's body and Mary's body are problematic for contemporary theologians, as the documentation of the inadequacy of these traditionalist views constitute a group of religious scholarship all of its own. Just as liberation theologians have rejected the assumption that the church can be apolitical in regards to class struggle (calling the church to be a church for the poor as opposed to a church for the rich), so have feminist theologians challenged the church to support a feminist as opposed to a sexist

perspective.²⁹ Ultimately, these theological movements reject the idea that objectivity is possible and desirable. To the extent that traditionalists in Peru continue to support the assumption that the church's tradition can be impartial, they continue to support a theological framework which is oppressive toward women.

²⁹ The articles by Ruether 1969, 1974 and the article by Bal 1985, are exemplary of this movement's criticisms of the official voice of the Roman Catholic church.

CHAPTER TWO

Woman as Mother: A Liberationist Perspective

This chapter examines the images of "woman as mother" as expressed in texts of the Peruvian liberation theology movement. Since most texts do not deal with women apart from images of Mary of Nazareth, my study focuses on images of "woman as mother" transmitted by particular images of Mary. Preliminary to this study, I qualify the position of the texts under examination within the context of the liberation theology movement generally, and specifically the posture of the author most under question, Gustavo Gutiérrez.

1. Why Gutiérrez?

Gustavo Gutiérrez first coined the term "liberation theology" in 1968 during a conference at Chimbote.³⁰ The

²⁶ In March, 1991, I visited some non-governmental organizations in Chimbote. One of the organizers of "La Casa de la Mujer" told me that a few years ago there were cases of bubonic plague in one of the shanty towns that surround the city. There had not been garbage pick up for more than a year and a half because the shanty towns were not officially recognized by the municipality. In January, 1991, the first cases of cholera which would begin an epidemic, were reported in this city.

The main sources of employment are work in the fish processing plants. The abundance of Shining Path graffiti

conference was sponsored by ONIS, a social analysis group formed in March, 1968, consisting of sixty priests and twenty laypersons. Shortly after its commencement twenty-eight more priests including Gutiérrez joined the group. These latecomers, whose perspectives were more radical than the original members', soon dominated the group's plan of action (Klaiber 1988: 381).

ONIS' timely formation occurred less than eight months before the II Latin American Episcopal Conference at Medellín, Colombia (CELAM II), and the coinciding Peruvian military coup d'etat led by General Juan Velasco Alvarado. According to church historian, Jeffrey Klaiber, both the Medellín conference and ONIS were not representative of the entire Latin American and Peruvian clergy. Klaiber argues that Gutiérrez and others like-minded were actually a small minority within the Peruvian clergy and the Latin American clergy as a whole (381-3). Their success in many ways can be accredited to good timing, as the accessibility of the CELAM II conference and the radical formation of the Velasco government gave these priests a public forum. ONIS directly contributed to the reforms of the Velasco government, notes Klaiber, as it made direct pronouncements in favour of the

around the town reflects the despair of the exploited workers. Fortunately I arrived in Chimbote one day before strikers closed off a section of the Pan American Highway between Chimbote and Trujillo. When I left the bus was forced to stop three times to detour around rocks and fires placed on the highway by strikers. I find it significant that the words "liberation theology" were first spoken in such a place.

government's reforms through pastoral letters and newspaper publications (381-3). It became obvious that the government wanted to maintain good relations with this group when in 1971 (the same year as Gutierrez published A Theology of Liberation in Spanish), Velasco ousted Armando Artola from his position as Minister of the Interior after he imprisoned Bishop Luis Bambarén for performing the mass in the invaded territory of "Pamplona" (401-2).³¹

Relations between the Peruvian liberation theology group and the state became much more ambiguous during the 1975-1980 rule of General Morales Bermudez, writes Klaiber. The church withdrew from the public view, he states, and tolerated the injustices of the ruling government as Morales Bermudez had promised to reinstate the electoral process at the end of his five year rule (412). It was during this time also that the Peruvian liberation theology group was changing its strategy, notes Klaiber, in the very period that liberation theology became influential world-wide. Unfortunately along with the attention came criticism and conflicts between factions of the Latin American church expressed most vividly in the debate over the documents to the 1979 CELAM III conference at Puebla, Mexico (Klaiber 417) (see Cox 1988). Whereas Gutiérrez actively and openly

³¹ This area is now called "Villa El Salvador" and is characterized by being one of the shanty towns surrounding Lima that has the most organized grassroots movement.

contributed to CELAM II, he was not invited to CELAM III and participated unofficially only as an advisor.

Apart from the significant influence Gutiérrez had within ONIS and the work he did to promote and preserve liberation theology at the CELAM conferences, Gutiérrez has also aided the movement's promotion through his writing. His 1971 publication of Teología de la Liberación: Perspectivas gave the movement a name and an identity. His publications, Teología desde el reverso de la historia (1977), La Fuerza de los Pobres: Selección de Trabajos (1978), Beber en su Propio Pozo. En el itinerario de un Pueblo (1983), Hablar de Dios desde el sufrimiento del Inocente. Una reflexión sobre el libro de Job (1986) are amongst his most renowned and have been translated into numerous languages.³² He has participated in so many international conferences and symposiums that, as Robert McAfee Brown states, he could pass all his time lecturing at intellectual centres throughout the world if he so chose (1980: 27).

For the most part, however, Gutiérrez spends his time in Peru, organizing summer courses and working with an intimate group at the Instituto Bartolomé de Las Casas in

³² Other publications include: Lineas Pastorales de La Iglesia en América Latina (1968), Liberation and Change (with Robert Schaul, 1977), El Dios de la Vida (1982) La verdad los hará libres: Confrontaciones (1986), Dios o el oro en las Indias (Siglo XVI) (1989), El Dios de la Vida (1990). Gutiérrez also has published numerous articles either individually or as parts of books.

Rimac. The "Jornadas de Reflexión Teológica," sponsored by The Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú in conjunction with The Instituto Bartolomé de Las Casas, are organized by Gutiérrez and his network of theologians at the institute.³³ Although the courses feature numerous speakers, Gutiérrez is always highlighted as the first and the last speaker. Many of the contributors to the reviews Allpanchis and Páginas and persons published by CEP frequently quote or openly state that they take on the perspective of Gutiérrez's A Theology of Liberation (see Lora 1985: 11). These internal factors together with the fame he has gained world-wide and the importance of his participation at the CELAM conferences have made Gutiérrez a leader and role model within liberation theology groups in and out of his country.

Generally Gutiérrez's discourse may be somewhat self-limited in order to avoid direct conflicts that other outspoken theologians have had with the Vatican which have led to their silencing. Gutiérrez and other liberation theologians from Peru in the "Jornadas de Reflexión Teológica" often quote Pope John Paul II and previous Popes and church documents in their presentations. It appears

³³ The "Jornadas" are often referred to as the "summer courses." They are held in August for one week and in February/March for two or three weeks. They have been ongoing for 21 years.

that every attempt is made to present their ideas as affirming past and present official church teaching.

It is therefore not surprising that texts dealing with woman and women's issues within the liberation theology movement in Peru are few and simply tend to describe women's reality of oppression rather than to reflect upon it. Such texts are often informative but rarely offer any plans of action to combat the situation, nor do they denounce that which oppresses or aids in oppressing women. As yet, it appears that the focus of the Peruvian group has been to make people aware that women are oppressed in a manner that does not in any way appear confrontational.³⁴

Only recently has Gutiérrez focused upon woman through the figure of Mary, for example in the chapter, "Santo es Su Nombre" (Holy is His Name), in his book, El Dios de la Vida (December 1989). "Santo es Su Nombre" is an exploration of the character, Mary of Nazareth, and an estimation of her as exemplifying life under the influence of the Holy Spirit and as thus capable of talking about God. In this work Gutiérrez states that there are many similarities between Mary of Nazareth and poor women living today in Latin America. Gutiérrez's text is chosen here as representative

³⁴ This is obvious by examining all the articles written in either Páginas or Allpanchis included in the bibliography. Rarely do the authors of these texts hypothesize why there is oppression of women and what can be done to combat it. The articles appear to be focused on information rather than reflection.

of the Peruvian liberation theology movement's image of "woman as mother," because the text considers women in Latin America in their similarity to Mary of Nazareth, who has traditionally been imagined as 'mother' and 'virgin' (see Chapter One). Gutiérrez's significant role within the movement as a whole is the chief reason why this text is held up as exemplary of the Peruvian movement's perception of "woman as mother." That there are few texts written about woman in general and only one by Gutiérrez written about woman makes the selection of the chapter "Santo es Su Nombre" that much easier. Prior to this text Gutiérrez briefly mentions women in the revised introduction to A Theology of Liberation and discusses women's oppression in an interview with Elsa Tamez in her book, Against Machismo. My examination of the image of woman as mother will therefore include some consideration of these texts but will focus upon the chapter, "Santo es Su Nombre."

2. "Santo es Su Nombre: Mary as "Woman"

The image of Mary as "Mother/Virgin" is an image that both North and South American feminists have identified as oppressive (see Chapter Three). This image of Mary as a biological paradox, both mother and virgin simultaneously, has, by definition, excluded women from full participation within the Catholic church (see Ruether 1974, Bal 1985).

Gutiérrez deemphasizes this image, stating that Mary's maternity is a symbol of her faith shown in her active commitment to God (1989: 326-331). Mary's virginity is, for Gutiérrez, symbolic of her complete commitment to God and the complete presence of God in her (340). In both cases, Gutiérrez does not state that these images are points of departure for an analysis of Mary's character. He mentions both of these images briefly in reference to other aspects of Mary's character which he chooses to highlight, and in no way does he mention them, mother and virgin, in relation to one another. What Gutiérrez does identify as central to Mary's character is her being "woman."

Instead of emphasising that Mary's body was witness to a miracle, as traditional theologians do when they focus upon Mary's paradoxical virginal motherhood, Gutiérrez chooses to emphasis Mary's body, or her womanhood, in relation to other bodies in her society. What exalts Mary, in Gutiérrez's view, is the reality of oppression and marginalization she experiences in her daily life as a woman in a sexist Judaic society. He writes:

Mary speaks to us about God from her position as a woman. She belongs to the feminine sex, marginalized, and despised/neglected by males. It is clearly impossible to separate Mary from her feminine condition; she is declared blessed not only as a believer, but as well as a woman. She will be called because of this "blessed amongst all women." To neglect this is to refuse to understand that which God wanted to reveal to us through her, and to slant the sentiment that the Gospel addresses in respect to Jesus' relation to his mother and women. Here the acts of the Lord

introduce a transforming seed that has not always been valued by his followers (my translation).³⁵

Gutiérrez encounters Mary in an historical setting where societal realities and attitudes play a major role in forming her relationship with and faith in God; she is fundamentally in relation to others.

This point of departure corresponds to one of the premises of liberation theology: that experience and relation to others in society as opposed to theory, is the proper point of departure for talking about God, or doing theology. God, for liberation theologians, is not a Being that merely reigns above the daily life of humanity, separate and other than what humankind feels and experiences. Rather, they assert, God is that which is constantly in relation to life and humankind, as God is that which is Life. In Gutiérrez's interview with Elsa Tamez he states that "... to take a certain reality as a starting point and to reflect upon it and from within it is a central tenet of our methodology" (1987: 46). Gutiérrez's study of Mary demonstrates that, in his view, this methodology not

³⁵ "María nos habla de Dios en su calidad de mujer. Pertenece al sexo femenino, marginado, y despreciado por la prepotencia masculina. Es claro que no es posible separar a María de su condición femenina; ella es declarada bienaventurada no sólo en tanto que creyente sino también como mujer, será llamada por eso "bendita entre todas las mujeres." Dejar esto de lado es negarse a comprender lo que Dios quiere revelarnos a través de ella, y soslayar el sentido que tienen los textos evangélicos en que Jesús se dirige a su madre y a las mujeres. La practica del Señor introduce en este punto en germen transformador que no siempre ha sido reconocido y valorado por sus seguidores (311)."

only pertains to people trying to create a discourse about God today, but also to people such as Mary of Nazareth who had a close relationship with God in the past.

The focus upon Mary's experience as a marginalized member of her society also corresponds to a second tenet of liberation theology, that being the "preferential option for the poor." Gutiérrez quotes the documents from CELAM III at Puebla, Mexico stating:

"The poor are not only in need of material goods, but also in the realm of human dignity, they are in need of a complete social and political participation. In this category we first encounter our indigenous, country people, workers, the marginalized people of the city, and very especially, the woman of these social sectors, because of her condition as doubly oppressed and marginalized. We are seeing in her the last of the last" (my translation).^{36 37}

Gutiérrez states that Mary is significant because of her position as one of the "last of the last" or the poorest of the poor. From the outset of the study it is evident that Gutiérrez's presentation of Mary affirms the premises of liberation theology as his method for analysis here does not contradict the methodology of liberation theology.

³⁶ In the footnote #6 given by Gutiérrez he explains that although this quote is taken from a footnote of the Puebla document it was presented in the body of the text of the working document.

³⁷ "Los pobres no sólo carecen de bienes materiales, sino también, en el plano de la dignidad humana, carecen de una plena participación social y política. En esta categoría se encuentran principalmente entre nuestros indígenas, campesinos, obreros, marginados de la ciudad y, muy en especial, la mujer de esos sectores sociales, por su condición doblemente oprimida y marginada" (n.1135,n.2)(6). Se trata pues de lo último de lo último (1989: 312).

As it is Mary's position as a member of the poorest of the poor that leads Gutiérrez to present her as an example of someone who has a close relationship with God,³⁸ Gutiérrez also is implying that Latin American women, being the poorest of the poor, have a closer relationship to God than their male counterparts. He mentions the incredible commitment and sensitivity women show toward others in Christian base communities all over Latin America and acknowledges that women's participation is of primary importance (314). It is Mary's position as poorest of the poor that leads Gutiérrez to state that she is under the influence of the Holy Spirit and thus capable of speaking about God. By valuing Mary's poverty, Gutiérrez not only upholds Latin American women as more capable Christians and more capable spiritual leaders than Latin American men, but also makes Mary accessible to these women. The often stated critique of the traditionalist image of Mary as mother/virgin is that women cannot biologically relate to her. The image of Mary as a poor woman marginalized by classism and sexism is an image that Latin American women can relate to and by which they can find inclusion in the church. Mary is just like them.

³⁸ The purpose of the last two chapters of the book, EL Dios de La Vida is to answer the question, "How can people talk about God?." Mary and Job are given as examples of people who were capable of talking about God because of being under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

In keeping with the tendency of the group of liberation theologians in Peru to avoid confrontation, Gutiérrez does not present this image of Mary in contrast to any traditionalist image. A direct denunciation of the church's images of Mary as mother/virgin would do little to help Gutiérrez's political situation within the church. Instead, it appears, Gutiérrez relies on his reader's ability to infer denunciations and challenges which he cannot openly state.

Doing thus, one can see that Gutiérrez's depiction of Mary as a poor woman who is a living subject in relation to others conflicts with the more sterile, objectified image of Mary as mother/virgin. Gutiérrez writes that the abstract adoration of woman often exists when women are oppressed in reality: "[o]ne praises women in abstract, but disregards them in concrete" (my translation).³⁹ Gutiérrez implies that such can be the case between the elevation of the image of Mary and the actual situation of women in the church:

"There is not a just struggle for the rights of the marginalized in the society if that struggle does not include the struggle for the rights of women; if her rights are not recognized we live in a sick society. The poor belong to a social class, but also to a race, a culture, and a sex. They are not juxtaposed aspects, but form a complete picture that protects the concept of poverty from being reduced to only one of its expressions.

Paradoxically, what results from this is the disproportion that we find many times in the church

³⁹ "[s]e ensalza a la mujer en abstracto, pero se le subestima en concreto" (312-3)".

between the role of Mary and the belittlement of women" (my translation)."⁴⁰

Gutiérrez continues by stating that it is often difficult to counteract oppressive cultural norms especially when one has contributed to those norms. He then states that many Christian thinkers have affirmed cultural norms that are opposed to the Christian message. The lack of concern for the rights of women, identified by Gutiérrez as a product of a sick society, is what he believes leads to the disproportion between Mary's role and the role of women in the church. Here Gutiérrez indirectly denounces sexism within the church and thereby also denounces any traditional images of Mary which are sexist.

By describing Mary's womanhood as foremost a posture by which she is in relation to other people in her society, Gutiérrez indirectly challenges the church's image of womanhood as private, the image of "woman as mother" confined by domestic life. His lack of concern for Mary's body as an object divinely manipulated, contrasts the official church's position concerning that which makes Mary

⁴⁰ "No hay en efecto una justa lucha por los reclamos de quienes son marginados por la sociedad si en ellos no se incluye los de la mujer; si sus derechos no son reconocidos vivimos en una sociedad enferma. El pobre pertenece a una clase social, pero también a una raza, a una cultura, a un sexo. No son aspectos yuxtapuestos, ellos forman un complejo entramado que impide reducir el pobre a una sola de sus vertientes.

Resulta paradójica, por eso, la desproporción que encontramos muchas veces en la Iglesia entre el papel que se le reconoce a María y la poca valoración de la mujer (313-4)."

holy, her pregnancy and virginal motherhood. Whereas the traditional church's images of womanhood and Mary lead many to conclude that womanhood is equal to motherhood, Gutiérrez's imagining of Mary and womanhood makes no relation between the two. What is most important for Gutiérrez is not how women's bodies dictate their lives, but rather how other bodies, other people in the society, dictate women's lives through social organizations and how women respond.

Relating to Gutiérrez's presentation of Mary as foremost a woman oppressed by the society in which she lives, is his sub-argument concerning the equality of men and women. Just as he says that many theologians have affirmed cultural norms as opposed to the will of God, so he says that many biblical texts reflect the cultural norm of sexism as opposed to the will of God that men and women are equal. Gutiérrez bases this argument upon an analysis of the Genesis creation stories.

Although Gutiérrez believes that many texts in both Old and New Testaments succumb to cultural norms as opposed to the will of God in regard to the equality between men and women, the Genesis creation stories, in his view, escape such cultural influence. The selection of this text for a dictate of the will of God concerning human relations appears to be arbitrary. At least Gutiérrez does not give any reason why the Genesis text is special in this regard.

His argument is based on his understanding of the role of woman as "helper" in Genesis 2:18,20. According to Gutiérrez, the word "helper" taken from the Hebrew word 'ezer' is best understood as "to be together with," as this is what is most significant about a helper or auxiliary person. The word therefore does not denote the consequent inferiority of women (315-6). From the first creation story found in Genesis 1:27, Gutiérrez asserts, men and women were created equally in the image of God (315). Thus the true plan of God concerning human beings is, for Gutiérrez, that men and women are equal as shown in Genesis 1:27 and complementary as shown in the Genesis 2:18-23 text, leading Gutiérrez to state that "[e]l ser humano tiene una indeclinable vocación comunitaria" (316).⁴¹

Gutiérrez continues to support the equality of the sexes by showing the important role women played in the ministry of Jesus. This presentation is inspired by Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza's book, In Memory of Her, A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins. Gutiérrez refers to this book and affirms Schussler Fiorenza's assumption that biblical texts, although being written by people who succumb to cultural norms which are sexist, can be dissected in order to reveal the real non-sexist story. This technique of ferreting out a hidden text

⁴¹ "the human being has an indeclinable vocation to live in community" (my translation).

from behind a text has been questioned by some scholars (see Bal 1985). Instead of delving into an analysis of this approach in general, which would be too involved for this thesis project, it is perhaps more important to question why Gutiérrez believes that this methodology is even necessary to prove the equality of men and women.

Perhaps his use of scripture in support of his claim is due to the politics of his own church community, that he cannot speak in favour of the liberation of women without risking serious reprimands from church authorities. Just as liberation theologians in Peru often present their views as mere restatements of the official church, Gutiérrez may use scriptural backing to legitimate himself before church authorities.

It seems impossible, in my view that a text identified by Gutiérrez as sexist is capable of dictating the truth concerning themes such as equality between the sexes, as this is the very thing that he states that it is guilty of negating. Although Gutiérrez's argument superficially gains more strength here, it is profoundly weakened by his selection of the Genesis texts as a dictate, and the importance he places upon the very impossible methodology of ferreting a non-sexist message out of a sexist text.

3. Mary as "Believer"/Activist,

After presenting Mary as fundamentally a poor woman, Gutiérrez explores two other main images, that of Mary as "believer" and Mary as "daughter of her people." These two images represent an expansion of the first image of Mary as a poor woman. Gutiérrez highlights the active character of Mary's faith in her status as "believer." Her complete faith in God, expressed both in active commitment to and collaboration with the Spirit, enables Mary to talk about God as a daughter of her people.

In dealing with the image of Mary as believer, Gutiérrez states that the depiction of Mary as a servant of God is often translated incorrectly. According to Gutiérrez, the Hebrew word "'ebed" most often translated as "servant" is not best understood as someone who is subordinate or inferior (328). Gutiérrez states:

Servants are those who announce the message of the Lord, states Luke citing Joel (He. 2,18), they are also the preachers of Jerusalem (He. 4,29) as Paul and Silas (my translation).⁴²

"'Ebed", writes Gutiérrez, is best translated as one who finds belonging in God. Mary was such a person in Gutiérrez's view as

⁴² "Siervos son los que anuncian el mensaje del Señor, dice Lucas citando a Joel (He.2,18), son también los predicadores de Jerusalén (He. 4, 29), así como Pablo y Silas (He. 16,17) (328)."

[s]he is not limited to listen and accept the call of God; her faith is a free act, The force of the Spirit summons her to an active participation; it is the collaboration of someone who understands God's work (my translation).⁴³

As a servant or 'ebed Gutiérrez shows Mary to be the announcer of the message of God; one who finds belonging with God. This intimate contact Mary has with God leads Gutiérrez to state that she is "... conscious of everything that her acceptance of God's will involves" (my translation).⁴⁴ Gutiérrez thus shatters the image of Mary as passive.

In no way is this image of Mary as believer passive, for Gutiérrez. He depicts Mary as an active partner in a divine happening, fully aware of what her commitment entails. Gutiérrez describes Mary's maternity as "... more than a personal gift it is a gift to all humanity in Mary ... a gift that is given to a person to benefit all of the community" (my translation).⁴⁵ Mary's faith, according to Gutiérrez, entails action and participation in the plan of God. Inseparable from Mary's faith, writes Gutiérrez, is her maternity; "[s]he is mother in her body and in her

⁴³ "[e]lla no se limita a escuchar y aceptar su anuncio; su fe es un acto libre, La fuerza del Espíritu suscita en ella una participación activa; es la colaboración de alguien que se sabe en manos de Dios (328-9)."

⁴⁴ "... consciente de todo lo que implica su aceptación de la voluntad de Dios" (329).

⁴⁵ "... más que un don personal es un don a la humanidad en María. ... un don que se da a la persona para beneficio de la comunidad" (329).

faith, or more exactly what happens in her body is owing to her faith" (my translation).⁴⁶

Apparently this second image of Mary as activist/believer is an extension of the image of Mary as woman. As active collaborator with the Spirit and one who actively changes her society through her openness to God and her commitment to others, Mary's stance as one who is conscious of the implications of her choice leads her to be a physical and spiritual mother figure. She is someone who gives herself to the community because of her commitment to God. In the February, 1990 session of the "Jórnadas de Reflexión," women are identified as one of the chief defenders of life in the country, examples of those who believe in a God of Life because they work in CEBS and other grassroots organizations which literally sustain the lives of their community.

Gutiérrez's description of Mary's maternity as a symbol of active commitment to God and to others in community corresponds to this reality of Latin American women working in grassroots organizations. Most analyses of women's participation in grassroots organizations conclude that women participate out of the need to sustain the lives of their community simply because they are the ones who are responsible for providing food for their children. They

⁴⁶ "[e]lla es madre en su cuerpo y en su fe, o más exactamente lo es en su cuerpo debido a su fe" (330).

participate from their position as mothers in the community and it is from their position as mothers that women are transforming their reality. Gutiérrez's depiction of Mary as believer reads as a description of what Peruvian poor women are doing today in a society where maternity is equated with commitment to the community (see Chapter Four).

4. Mary as "Daughter of Her People"

The last of Gutiérrez's three main images of Mary is the image of Mary as "daughter of her people." It is from this posture as a "daughter of her people," he states, that Mary is able to speak about God. This last main image tends to encompass the previous two images. Mary as a daughter of her people is in solidarity with them.

As described in the Magnificat, writes Gutiérrez, Mary affirms this solidarity. Gutiérrez states that it is important to understand the proper translation of the word "humility: used to describe Mary in Luke 1:47,48:

... mi espíritu se alegra en Dios mi salvador'
porque ha puesto los ojos en la humildad de su
esclava.⁴⁷

According to Gutiérrez, the word

humility translates "tapeinosis," a term that has a clear connotation of misery and oppression, ... "Tapeinosis" frequently translates in Hebrew as "oni" which expresses the affliction resulting

⁴⁷ This biblical passage is taken from "Santo es Su Nombre", p.338.

from the servitude of the people (my translation).^{48 49}

It is because of her posture as daughter of her people, as a person belonging to and having solidarity with an oppressed community, that Gutiérrez believes she is able to know God's character. The central message of her discourse, according to Gutiérrez, is found in the second half of verse 49 when Mary proclaims, "Santo es Su nombre". Although there are other verses of the Magnificat that represent Gutiérrez's presentation more fully, he chooses, most likely for political reasons, to encapsulate Mary's message by the bland statement, "Holy is His name."

5. Mary as "Sufferer"

Apart from these three main images of Mary, Gutiérrez also presents the image of Mary as "sufferer." Although Gutiérrez places this image under the heading of Mary as "believer," it is involved enough to warrant special attention here. This image of Mary as sufferer is significant, according to Gutiérrez, because the poor in Latin America find it important. He quotes an interview

⁴⁸ See Gutiérrez' footnote #21 on the same page for more detailed translation of the verb, *tapeinóo*.

⁴⁹ "[h]umildad traduce *tapéinosis*, término que tiene una clara connotación de miseria y opresión, ... *Tapéinosis* traduce con frecuencia el hebreo 'oni que expresa la aflicción proveniente de la servidumbre y del despojo ..." (339).

made with an old Andean man who is nearly blind and deaf.

The man says:

"I only have this coca that our Holy Mother Mary knew how to chew. Because of this, the coca is my nourishment, my coffee, my everything; only this coca serves me. In my pain and in my joys, eating nothing more than this coca, I pass my life, ..." (my translation).⁵⁰

He continues to explain that he believes Mary chewed coca leaves to help her deal with the pain she experienced because of her son's death. Gutiérrez uses this interview to show how suffering is an important aspect of indigenous spirituality. In all of Perú, suffering is clearly a major characteristic of popular religion, as the people carry the heavy weight of the saints on their shoulders and walk miles often barefoot or on their knees.⁵¹ Statues of Christ in Peruvian churches most often have an extraordinary amount of blood running from their wounds and generally appear less

⁵⁰ "... Sólo tengo esta coca que nuestra madre María Santísima la sabía morder. Por eso esta coca es mi alimento, mi café, mi todo; sólo esta coca me sirve. En las penas, en las alegrías, comiendo esta coca nomás paso mi vida, señor. ... (334)".

⁵¹ Popular religion or "religiosidad popular" refers to the religious culture that is distinct from the organized church. Every village has its own designated saint. A representation of the saint is paraded about the village in long processions at various times of the year. Such religious practices have been used to maintain religious belief in areas where priests and other religious workers could rarely visit more than once a year. In Lima there are processions of "El Señor de Los Milagros" in the month of November. These processions are the largest in Peru, gathering thousands at a time. These processions are fundamentally celebrations, however, they do involve suffering as the people have to literally carry their saint on their backs.

glorious in comparison to European statues. For example, the statue of Christ in the Cathedral in Cajamarca is colloquially called the "Worried Christ." Jesus is depicted cross legged leaning over with his head resting on a bent arm. In the guide book to Peru published by Lonely Planet, Rob Rachoweichi comments that Jesus looks like he could use a good "Pisco Sour," a popular Peruvian cocktail, after a hard day of miracle working.

Although this depiction of Mary chewing coca to soothe her suffering shows the uniqueness of Andean spirituality, it must be questioned whether the image of Mary as "la dolorosa," prevalent in all of Latin America, is a positive image. If Gutiérrez intends to suggest that an image takes on the perspective of the poor simply by being popular amongst the poor, then many images could be identified as taking on such a perspective even though they clearly are created by a mindset which supports the interests of the rich. Such are the theological images that liberation theologians have struggled to oppose, the holiness of the poor's passivity and suffering which will earn them reward in the "next life." As Gustavo Gutiérrez himself said in a lecture at the "Jórnada" in February of 1990, just because someone is poor s/he does not necessarily have an "option for the poor." There are many poor people who have solidarity with the rich instead of the poor. Likewise, just because this image of Mary as "sufferer" is prevalent

amongst the poor, it d not suggest that it is beneficial to them. This image could be an image of Mary taken from the standpoint of the rich who wish to pacify the poor. It is not sufficient, therefore, for Gutiérrez to say that this image gives value and supports the struggles of the poor simply because the poor believe it to be important.

Also important to this study is an article written by Consuelo de Prado, a Spanish nun working and collaborating with liberation theologians in Perú. This article, entitled "Yo siento a Dios de otro Modo," is important because it is one of the first texts explicitly dealing with feminist spirituality from within the liberation theology group in the country. The title is inspired by Peruvian author José Arguedas' book, Todas Las Sangres. The idea of "feeling God in a different way" was used by Arguedas to exemplify how the poor people as opposed to the rich experience the sacred. Prado's exploration of feminist spirituality leads her to conclude that women's spirituality is intimately connected with Mary. This text therefore proves helpful in interpreting the Gutiérrez text as it offers another interpretation of women's reality and of Mary from within the liberation theology group.

6. Consuelo de Prado: "Yo Siento a Dios de Otro Modo"

The article, "Yo Siento a Dios de Otro Modo," (I feel God in a Different Way) by Consuelo de Prado, offers an understanding of suffering that illuminates the shortcomings of Gutiérrez's discussion. In her presentation of feminist spirituality, Prado examines three main characteristics of women's lives, those being women's suffering, women's ability to give thanks to God and women's strength. In all areas Prado concludes that women's spirituality is primarily a Marian spirituality. Prado outlines Mary's posture as a marginalized woman doubly exploited by class struggle and sexism, a woman that is strong enough to overcome the powerful, and is capable of worshiping God. The text therefore proposes an understanding of feminist spirituality that complements Gutiérrez's examination of Mary. Gutiérrez's text appears to be an inverted version of Prado's as he first focuses on Mary's spirituality which then leads him to women's spirituality, whereas Prado does the opposite. The text's more indepth survey of women's suffering therefore may illuminate the shortcomings of Gutiérrez's presentation of Mary as "sufferer."

Prado states that the Latin American women's lives in the popular sectors of society is equal to suffering. Quoting the CELAM III document just as Gutiérrez, she writes that it is because of this great suffering that these women

are able to understand the needs of others (3). In the pain of their daily life, Prado writes, women become conscious of their being and they find strength as they encounter the meaning to their lives in their struggle to attain justice.

Prado states:

The experience of the "religion of suffering" which appears related to the woman from the poor classes, is transformed from within by the action of the Holy Spirit that calls her to become committed (my translation).⁵²

Women's suffering, in Prado's view, is transformed into capability. She compares Latin American women to Mary at the foot of the cross sharing the complete suffering in communion with her son (5). Suffering in this perspective takes on qualities similar to the resurrection of Jesus, as there is a profound relationship drawn between powerlessness and power or life and death.

Gutiérrez refers to the relationship between life and death in his interview with Elsa Tamez. He tells Tamez:

There is a profound spirituality of the poor centered on the death/life dialectic. Faced with their own death/life dialectic, even in the biological sense, women experience something that men do not (1987: 44)

This dialectic, as Gutiérrez refers to it, is a central theme of the book, Mujer: Víctima de Opresión, Portadora de Liberación by Carmen Lora, Cecilia Barnechea and Fryné

⁵² "La experiencia de una "religión de sufrimiento" a la que parecía abocada la mujer del pueblo pobre, se ve transformada desde dentro por la acción de Espíritu que la mueve al compromiso (3)."

Santisteban. Here the authors confirm Prado's statement that women's lives are equated with suffering. They state that from this posture as oppressed women are able to liberate their communities. Gutiérrez presentation of Mary's suffering in "Santo es Su Nombre," however, does not show this sentiment of empowerment through suffering. His concentration remains upon the ability of poor people to relate to Mary's suffering. If he intended for the reader to go beyond this comparison to an understanding of this death/life dialectic, he did not infer such in his brief presentation.

Conclusions:

In accordance with liberation theology generally, Gutiérrez's presentation has a definite bias. He clearly intends to view the figure of Mary and the process of "talking about God" in a way which supports the perspective of the poor, as opposed to the rich. If Gutiérrez proposed to take an objective standpoint he could be criticized for the circularity of this argument, that his assumption that God has a "preferential option for the poor" has led him to conclude that being under the Spirit's influence means to have such an option. He intends, however, to take such a bias and propose such a circular argument. Liberation theology or "talk about God," is best done, in Gutiérrez's

opinion, when people are openly biased toward liberating the poor and when they commit themselves to increasing that bias in the ways in which they act and reflect upon that action. This bias is initiated by the Christian belief that God calls people to love one another and is, in Gutiérrez's view, an affirmation of belief in a God of Life amidst an unjust world.⁵³

What is most important is that Gutiérrez chooses Mary to support the assumptions of liberation theology and that he outlines her character as being very similar to Latin American women. Without directly saying so, Gutiérrez presents Latin American women as the most capable of doing theology, as he portrays Mary's status as an oppressed poor woman as the key to her spirituality. As poorest of the poor, and actively expressing their faith in God through their commitment to others, these women are the greatest spiritual leaders of their communities. Gutiérrez's presentation is an affirmation of what is already present in his Peruvian reality. In Peru there are twice as many women religious as men religious (see Mooney 1983: 5). Nuns often take on responsibilities of complete parishes, performing most of the functions of a priest (Idigoras 1991). Most Christian Base Communities or CEBS are lead by women, and

⁵³ This was the theme of Gutiérrez's summer courses or "Jórnadas" that he organized in 1989-90. Through an option for the poor is how he maintains that the people can continue to believe in a God of Life. This is also a major theme of his book, El Dios de la Vida.

the majority of those who participate are women.⁵⁴ By affirming that women are more capable than men, Gutiérrez challenges the present political system of the Catholic church that excludes women from the more responsible positions of leadership. Gutiérrez states this challenge indirectly and it must therefore be deduced from several elements of his depiction of Mary. It can be assumed that Gutiérrez is not in the position to make such a statement directly without serious reprimands from the Vatican.

In conclusion, Gutiérrez presents Mary as a woman similar to Latin American women living in popular sectors of society today. Imaged as the prototypical woman, poorest of the poor, Gutiérrez's Mary gives value to women's lives. He presents an image through which women can find inclusion and value within the Catholic church. Many traditional images are indirectly challenged by Gutiérrez's portrayal of Mary as he states that women are more capable spiritual leaders and most capable of making theology. All of Mary's spiritual strength as a believer and as a daughter of her people stem from her position as one of the poorest of the poor, as this posture leads her to a complete active faith which in turn enables her to speak. Gutiérrez's description of women's ability to be committed to others within the

⁵⁴ This conclusion I deduced from participating in a Bible course with CEB leaders for ten months in the city centre of Lima, taking surveys in the parish, and speaking with religious workers who work in different communities.

framework of CEBs because of their posture as poorest of the poor implies a connection between poverty and the ability to active faith. It is women's and Mary's poverty which appear central for Gutiérrez, as it is from this status that both are enabled to act upon their faith and then talk about God. Gutiérrez therefore views commitment to the poor in one's faith and action as equivalent to being under the influence of the Spirit. This is what liberation theologians have defined as "the preferential option for the poor."

Gutiérrez's image of Mary supports the reality of Latin American women in their roles as mothers. Woman as mother here is not only a mother limited to the private sector of society but rather the opposite, a mother who is drawn to work for the betterment of the community in the public sector. "Motherhood" in Gutiérrez's view is symbolic of solidarity. Mothers in this perspective are spiritual leaders.

In the end, however, Gutiérrez and the other noted liberation theologians fail to denounce the situation of injustice from which women suffer. As already stated, the Peruvian liberation theology group characteristically does not openly confront the existing political order in the Catholic church for reasons of their own survival. There is a possibility, however, that these theologians are guilty of "spiritualizing" the oppression of women.

The reality of Peruvian women corresponds to Gutiérrez's outline of Mary's character: they are the informal spiritual leaders of their community and they are those who are active in grassroots organizations. Gutiérrez's study supports these women and gives them value, but it must be questioned whether Gutiérrez's study aims at the further liberation of these women. Although women's work is invaluable in the Peruvian society, it is also very limited because of the oppression they suffer within their own families. What Gutiérrez has identified as commitment because of a special spirituality is commitment motivated chiefly by need. Peruvian women work for community because if they did not their families and they, themselves, would die. Even though these "SuperMadres" who work constantly for their families symbolize solidarity in one perspective, they also are symbolic of the very profound lack of solidarity in the family itself on the other hand (see Moreno Rejón 1980).

Although it is possible to understand why Gutiérrez and the others do not deal with topics such as women in the priesthood because of their political situation in the church, I do not believe that they can be excused for avoiding the issue of inequality between men and women in the family or society because it is not as controversial as the others as far as the organized church is concerned. This denunciation would be a denunciation of the social

order outside the church. By not addressing this issue liberation theologians affirm the status quo.

CHAPTER THREE

An Alternative Image of Woman and Motherhood: Peruvian Feminists Challenge the Status Quo

This chapter is limited to texts produced by organizations which identify themselves as "feminist" or supportive of a "feminist" perspective. More specifically, the chapter considers the image of woman as mother that has been developed by the most representative of feminist organizations in Peru, "El Centro de la Mujer Peruana, Flora Tristán." My focus continues to be the image of mother in relation to Mary of Nazareth, a focus which, as I have argued, facilitates a comparison between liberation theology and "feminist" thinking.⁵⁵ As feminist images of woman as mother are primarily focused upon criticisms of the images of mother established by the traditional church and issues not raised by liberationists, this also study facilitates a comparison between all three groups.

⁵⁵ In such a study the feminist movement in Peru must be considered distinct from occidental movements, even though it continues to be supported and inspired by them. This is necessary due to the difficulty of comparing cultural norms concerning sex roles in Latin America with those of the occidental world. The task of comparison becomes even more complex when one country has a standard of living much higher than the next. Essentially, the number of cultural, political, and economic factors that must be considered in such an analysis are so great that this thesis could be exhausted simply by justifying its methodology.

Like the liberation theology movement, the feminist movement in Peru is not a formal organization in which people hold membership. For example, numerous non-governmental organizations which do not identify themselves as feminist have communication with the feminist group "Flora Tristán." Flora Tristán is in turn connected with some grassroots organizations such as "Clubes de Madres," "Clubes de Mujeres," and "Comedores Populares." These latter groups are managed almost exclusively by women, and as such often are centres of consciousness-raising whereby women become aware of their oppression by men. However, these groups do not call themselves "feminist," even though they may accomplish the goals of groups explicitly labelled "feminist."

1. The History of "Flora Tristán" in the Peruvian Feminist Movement

Since its beginning in the late 1970s Flora Tristán has been the feminist group in Peru which has shown the most marked expansion. Financial assistance from Europe and North America has enabled the group to move from a small shared location at 431 Quilca in Lima's core area to a stylish large building at 42 Parque Hernán Velarde. Foreign sponsorship has resulted in the group's autonomy, for despite Peru's continual and escalating economic crises,

Flora Tristán's building has undergone renovations and the group has recently expanded into a nearby rented space. Flora's rapid expansion is not the only consequence of the favour it has cultivated amongst foreigners.

Simply because it is one of the few groups within the country able to put time and money into networking activities, it has adopted the posture of unofficial leader of the Peruvian feminist movement. Its expansion has led also to high visibility both in and out of the country, and the financial advantage it has over other groups has enabled it to publish a greater number of texts suitable for academic study. It must be noted, however, that many feminist groups within the country, even if they had the means, would have little interest in publishing academic texts. They would much prefer to publish texts suitable for poor women. Nevertheless the publishing of academic texts results in yet more attention from foreign bodies and increased financial assistance and the ability to work on a wider scale.

The history of the feminist movement in Peru is best described as the history of the house at 431 Quilca where Flora Tristán began. There the groups "Creatividad y Cambio," "El Centro Pozo" and "Talitha Cumi" continue to work. At the beginning it was the home of Creatividad y

Cambio, "ALIMUPER"⁵⁶, and Flora Tristán. According to Rosa Domingo Trapasso, an American Maryknoll nun who has worked in Peru since 1954⁵⁷, Flora Tristán was then a group of women meeting informally in the home of Virginia Vargas⁵⁸. ALIMUPER, which had existed prior to Flora Tristán, according to Trapasso, was a group of ten or twelve people who voluntarily came together to talk about themselves as women. They did not have project money and they did not work with the poor. It was essentially a reflection group (Trapasso 1990). *Creatividad y Cambio*, in Trapasso's

⁵⁶ Alimuper is short for "Acción para la Liberación de la Mujer Peruana".

⁵⁷ Trapasso is one of the 24 religious women who signed their names to a petition in the New York Times in 1984 in reaction to the problems Geraldine Ferraro was having because of her pro-choice political stance. Trapasso says that after she signed the petition she was formally asked to retract her statement. Letters sent to her community officials not only stated that they wanted her to retract her statement officially but also stated that they knew that Trapasso had been seen attending certain feminist meetings since her statement. She was being watched. The issue is still not formally resolved. The Maryknoll community has decided not to respond to the letters they received from the Vatican. (Taken from a conversation I had with Trapasso in February, 1990)

⁵⁸ Virginia Vargas is the "official matriarch" of Flora Tristán. She presently teaches in the Netherlands for six months of each year. Her father was Comptroller General of the Nation during the military rule of Velasco. She was almost imprisoned in Chile during the coup d'etat by Pinochet, but her father arranged for her safe escape. She left taking 100 people with her. She has incredible personal power. (taken from an interview with a person who has been in contact with "Flora Tristán" since 1985. The person was reticent about giving her name because she fears economic reprisals from "Flora". I met this woman at "Flora Tristán".)

opinion, has never been explicitly a feminist organization.

She describes its focus:

Creatividad y Cambio was already in existence [in 1979] but not as a women's organization. I think that this is a very important point to make. We existed as women with a strong feminist documentation and a library services of small publications concerning popular education and a series of topics that deal with social problems in general - not only the concerns of women. But we had a very strong emphasis on women's issues and we had strong connections with the women of Flora Tristán and were members of ALIMUPER. It was then as friends of Flora Tristán, members of ALIMUPER, and out of our own concern for social problems and the need to find a place that would give us a chance to be available to the public that we left our former office to move to this house that we are still in now (Trapasso 1990).

Although Trapasso defines Creatividad y Cambio's orientation as rather general, the group works so intimately with groups that do label themselves feminist, that it is identified as part of the movement.

Trapasso thinks that one of the most important things about sharing the Quilca space is that it gave the groups a sense of identity and it gave women's groups visibility. Prior to 1980 there was no place that could be identified as specifically for women's groups (Trapasso 1990). In Trapasso's view the second most important thing that happened at Quilca was the decision for the groups to pool all the materials they had on women and begin a documentation centre in the place which Flora had occupied. This centre was called "CENDOC MUJER," "Centro de Documentación de la Mujer." After a number of years CENDOC

MUJER received funding from the exterior and, like Flora, moved to a larger space in a wealthy neighbourhood. El Centro Pozo, a centre serving prostitutes, has remained in its place ever since.

After a year and a half, at the same time that it became evident that Flora Tristán needed more space, ALIMUPER disbanded. Trapasso describes the decision to end the group as following:

ALIMUPER was having some internal problems and I think it was also becoming aware that the way feminism in Peru seemed to be going was more in terms of centres that were funded by outside the country and had a lot of infrastructure and a lot of possibilities of working in the "base". The fact that they were working in the "base" seemed to legitimate their cause in front of the public eye. Feminism that didn't work in the "base", that was just a consciousness raising group such as ALIMUPER was considered to be bourgeois and alienating. I think ALIMUPER, although I would never put those adjectives on it, perceived that this was not the moment that it was going to be able to grow. The growth in the feminist movement was then in the centres. So ALIMUPER disbanded after the two years that we were here and Flora Tristán needed to move out (Trapasso 1990).

Creatividad y Cambio, says Trapasso, had the opportunity to go along with Flora Tristán, but decided to stay at Quilca because they felt it to be a more practical location for serving poor women.

Although there are presently three groups meeting and working within the house, many of the same women belong to all three groups. Talitha Cumi was born in 1983 after "The Second Latin American Conference on Women" was held in Lima. The theme of the conference was patriarchy, and after a

small group joined together at the conference to discuss patriarchy in the church, they realized that they needed to continue this reflection (Trapasso 1990). Since most of the women who work at Creatividad y Cambio and El Centro Pozo are connected with the church, they also participated in the formation of this group.

Feminist groups such as Creatividad y Cambio boast of feminist groups' ability to work together. Trapasso states:

[Peru] is a country that is cut up into all types of fractions politically, and against that the feminist movement has been quite unusual. It is a surprise to us that we have been able to have a different perspective, a different view of power, a different view of working together without competition (Trapasso 1990).

There are disadvantages however to being a poor organization. In times of economic crisis, poorer groups are harder hit and must be more concerned with their own survival while richer groups continue to expand.

Though the members of the poorer organizations never comment upon the economic disparity between themselves and Flora, there are marked differences between the groups that potentially could cause conflict. At a meeting of Talitha Cumi that I attended in February, 1991, the group spent considerable time debating whether they could justify spending \$20 U.S. to participate in a small festival leading up to the Women's Day celebration. In the end they felt that they could not afford it. Not only do the women in this group work in one of the most polluted and destitute

areas of Lima, but some of them live in an equally poor area of the city very far from the centre. One night following a meeting, I said goodbye to one of the women who was waiting for public transport taking her home to an area even more dangerous than the one in which she works. It became evident to me how committed to the poor this group is: it is poor itself.

As well, I have often been impressed by the beautiful architecture of Flora Tristán's building and wondered if poor women might feel self-conscious in such a place. Flora's wealth was reflected in the high cost of the entrance fee to the 1991 Women's Day celebration, \$3 U.S. while the minimum wage for a month's work was then \$78 U.S. Most of the women in the country could not afford to attend. Even though one performer claimed to represent "las mujeres campesinas" (women from the countryside), the poorest most oppressed women in the country, the celebration was aimed to entertain and inform middle and upper class women, and catered more to the needs of groups like Flora Tristán than to those of *Creatividad y Cambio*. Nevertheless poorer feminist groups willingly participated even though several representatives of groups commented that they found the entrance fee to be a problem.

Even though an outsider may view Flora Tristán and Talitha Cumi as having conflicting emphases, the groups themselves do not voice these concerns. These differences

appear to be reconciled as Trapasso indicates. Perhaps this "different view of competition" is present within the Peruvian feminist movement because feminism in general is not well accepted by the Peruvian populace. From the very beginning these groups which came together at Quilca were dependent upon one another as they strove to create a public place for women's groups. Although feminism has grown in the last ten years internal dissention would seriously weaken the groups' ability to survive. Not only would voiced conflicts deter public support for the movement inside the country, it would also discourage foreigners from lending financial assistance to particular groups.

2. Portugal, Trapasso: Challenging Woman as Mother

Their open denunciation of the church's sacralization of women's oppression has led many Peruvian feminists to reject the church entirely. Even the Christian feminist group Talitha Cumi reflects upon "feminist" to a greater degree than "Christian" texts. As well they focus upon the celebrations of the "Day of Non-Violence Against Women" and "International Women's Day," instead of Christmas and Easter (Trapasso 1990). Only recently have feminists begun to realize the importance of religious images. Ana María Portugal explains that most Peruvian feminists at one time or another participated in the church. Many have left and

have since disregarded religious themes. In fact, Portugal believes that in general feminists have forgotten that the majority of women with whom they work are still Christians. Even though poor women are critical of the church they still hold many beliefs in it, adds Portugal. Consequently, Portugal feels there is much work to be done in the area of religion. Moreover, she insists that this deficiency is not yet an official concern of the feminist movement, but rather the preoccupation of a few interested individuals (Portugal 1991).

Any study involving the church and feminism is therefore limited by the scarcity of feminist texts concerning religion. It is limited further by the lack of academic texts produced by smaller feminist groups. This study of the image of "woman as mother" in relation to the image of Mary will necessarily be founded upon texts written or published by Flora Tristán. As Ana María Portugal is one of the few feminists within the group who has dealt with the theme of women and the church her texts will be emphasized. Fortunately Rosa Domingo Trapasso from the group "Talitha Cumi" is often published by "Flora Tristán" or Latin American Press, and is included in this study. Taped meetings, interviews and lectures involving these two women and their groups will be considered along with their published texts. As these two women are representative of feminists groups both large and small, Christian and

secular, as well as rich and poor, their opinions are taken as representative of the larger feminist movement in the country.

2a. The Manipulation of Eve and Mary:

According to feminists Ana María Portugal and Rosa Domingo Trapasso, Mary has been used to oppress women in Latin American society. The image of woman that is predominant in Peruvian society and in the Peruvian Catholic church is the image of "woman as mother" (Portugal, et.al. 1989: 73). This image alienates women, state feminists Trapasso and Portugal, as it is derived from the premise that women are naturally sinful and must justify themselves through motherhood. In this light motherhood denies sexuality for purposes other than procreation. This image is fundamentally based upon the church's interpretation of the characters Eve and Mary, which Portugal and Trapasso find reflective of subversive sexism.

Both Trapasso's and Portugal's arguments are based upon the assumption that all religions have a socio-political dimension (Trapasso 1990b: 19). Not only do the texts of Catholic theologians such as Augustine and Thomas de Aquinas reflect the sexist mindset of their culture, writes Trapasso, but the Bible itself is sexist from Genesis through to the writings of Paul in the New Testament (Trapasso 1990b: 19). Even though it is important to

realize that the church is not the only institution that is responsible for women's oppression, Trapasso maintains, it is necessary to recognize that the church has given sexism a seal of divine approval (Trapasso 1990b: 20). Trapasso's example of this approbation is in the church's traditional depiction the relationship between Eve and Mary.

In Trapasso's analysis, the church's image of women is based upon an interpretation of the Genesis creation story which identifies Eve as sinful. Eve bears the burden of responsibility for all of humankind's deficiencies; it was she who gave in to the temptation of the forbidden thereby setting the plan of God askew. From this interpretation of Genesis, church authorities have traditionally concluded that women by their very nature are sinful, concupiscent, and deficient. Trapasso summarizes Augustine's perspective of women by stating that he

... maintained that women were not in the image of God. Only the man was made in the image in his own right, the woman could have it by way of the man (my translation).⁵⁹

Such damning conclusions were also made by Thomas de Aquinas, Trapasso writes, as he "... defined women as "disfigured men" that were innately deficient" (my

⁵⁹ "... sostenía que la mujer no tenía la imagen de Dios. Solamente el hombre poseía la imagen de Dios por derecho propio; la mujer lo puede tener en segundo plano, a través del hombre" (Trapasso 1990b: 21).

translation).⁶⁰ According to this patriarchal Gospel of Augustine and Aquinas, women are destined to a life of subservience to men, and alienation from God.

Diametrically opposed to this image of the sinful carnal woman, rooted in the Old Testament Eve, Trapasso notes, is the church-promoted image of Mary, specifically the image of Mary as "mother." Trapasso states that according to the church sexuality (identified by Augustine as sinful) strictly must be focused upon procreation. She cites I Timothy 2:14-15, as indicative of the church's belief in the possibility of cleansing the inherently sinful women through the transforming maternal role:

Y el en gañado no fue Adán, sino la mujer que,
seducida, incurrió en la transgresión. Con toda,
se salvará por su maternidad.

Trapasso quotes Rosemary Radford Ruether who argues that Christianity has produced a schizophrenic vision of women, dividing women into two types: carnal, real women made of flesh and bone like the fallen Eve, or lofty spiritual women represented by the Virgin Mary (Trapasso 1990b: 21).

Ana María Portugal affirms Trapasso's critical analysis of the church's view of women. In the specific context of the Latin American church she sees the dichotomous relationship between Mary and Eve used to effectively

⁶⁰ "... definió a mujeres como 'Varones mal formados' que tienen por su propio naturaleza una capacidad deficiente (Trapasso 1990b: 21)".

control and oppress Latin American women (Portugal 1989:2).

She states that

[i]n Latin America the Marian Cult is more than legitimate devotion to the mother of God. 'Marianism' is the cult of the superiority of feminine spirituality, which embodies simultaneously the ideal of care giver/maternity and chastity (my translation).^{61 62}

The ideals of maternity and chastity, in Portugal's view, cannot be achieved simultaneously and therefore causes great frustration for committed Catholic women. Nevertheless, Portugal states that it is through maternity that women regain their honour, as they reflect the image of Mary (Portugal 1989: 2).

The sinfulness of sexuality promoted by the church through this image of carnal woman has left Latin American women alienated from sexual pleasure. Portugal rebukes the idea that sexual pleasure is only for the bourgeois (Portugal 1989: 66). She states that many progressive groups within the church find it impossible to talk to popular women about sexual pleasure because they believe

⁶¹ In May, 1988, six women from Latin America and one from the U.S.A. met in Popayan, Cali, Colombia to discuss the publication of a book of testimonies and reflections on the themes of abortion, religion and sexuality in a Latin American context. The book, Mujeres e Iglesia, is the result of the women's collective efforts, the first such work in Latin America made possible through the support of 'Catholics for Free Choice'.

⁶² "[e]n América Latina el culto mariano es más que una legítima devoción a quien es considerada la madre de Dios. "El marianismo es el culto de la superioridad espiritual femenina, aquel que encarna simultáneamente el ideal de crianza/maternidad y castidad (Portugal 1989: 2)".

that these themes are only preoccupations of rich women (Portugal 1989: 66). She says that there is a prevalent belief that sexual pleasure is not important to poor women (Portugal 1989: 66). Portugal supports her argument in the article, "Formación y Deformación: Educación Para la Culpa," wherein she examines the history of Latin America, and identifies the ways in which women are taught to believe that they should feel guilty about their female bodies (Portugal 1989: 47).

2b. Sexism in a Peruvian Context: A Critique of Liberation Theology

Although it is obvious that these women have read books by feminist theologians outside the country (such as Rosemary Radford Ruether whom Trapasso quotes), it cannot rightfully be said that their arguments are purely imitations of feminism from the industrialized world. What is important here is that both Trapasso and Portugal are attempting to explain the oppressive image and the very real phenomenon of women as mother in the Peruvian context. It is obvious to these women that the image of Mary has been used to promote and reinforce the subservience of the Peruvian mother. Just as they find that women are redeemed by motherhood through Mary, so can they see that women in Peruvian society are valued only as mothers. The common description of women as "duenas de la casa" (owners of a

house) reflects how Peruvian culture empowers the woman as the real head of the household, at the same time it that makes her a slave to the occupants of that house (see Gutiérrez 1990).

Many of the sexist cultural attitudes that Trapasso and Portugal discover admittedly dominate Catholic history in general, appear predominant and long-lived in the Catholic church in Latin America. The control of sexuality through confession, outlined in the book Portugal edited, Mujeres e Iglesia, Sexualidad y Aborto en America Latina, is an example of how this form of sexism is also relevant to the Latin American context. Portugal indicates that even precursors of liberation theology, such as González Vigil, affirmed that women would not have a public place (Portugal 1989: 37-8). Such sexism has not been recognized by today's liberation theology movement. It is not surprising, then, that feminists criticize the movement for being sexist and repressive in and against its own liberationist goals. In a meeting with feminist liberation theologian, Dorothee Sölle, members of the group "Talitha Cumi" expressed their anger at the liberation theology movement in the country. Though Gutiérrez may be feminist while he is outside the country, he definitely is not a feminist inside Peru, one member stated. They felt marginalized by this movement in whom they hoped for inclusion (Talitha Cumi 1991). Ana Maria Portugal states that the biggest critique the

feminists have of liberation theology is that it does not support reproductive rights (Portugal 1991). In a study Karen O'Brien made of the feminist and liberation theology movements in Peru she concluded that

... the claim of liberation theology to be "integrated" in its ideology and methodology becomes thwarted by its insistence on focusing on economic oppression as the major source of injustice (O'Brien 1986) (see Latin American Press, January 16, 23).

Similar denunciations of liberation theology have been voiced in the book, Mujeres e Iglesia, Sexualidad y Aborto en América Latina, in articles by Portugal and the group "Talitha Cumi." In a letter written to the Pope included in the book, thirteen feminist groups urge the Pope to reconsider the church's official position on birth control. They demand that the church reconsider the "preferential option for the poor" so that it is as well in a "preferential option for women." As well, the group "Talitha Cumi" directly challenges the liberation theology group to develop a feminist theology of liberation in a document resulting from the "Taller Feminismo e Iglesia, IV Encuentro Feminista Latinoamericano y del Caribe" held in Mexico in 1987.

3. Alternative Images of Motherhood

Peruvian feminists challenge the cultural norms of the image of "woman as mother," which are simultaneously

reinforced by the church's dictated image of Mary of Nazareth. Because this area of religious authority has not been analyzed to a great extent by the Peruvian feminist group, there are few texts that deal with the reconstruction of the image of Mary. Frankly, Peruvian feminists, who for the most part have left the church entirely, have not yet dedicated themselves to this task. They are not theologians nor do they exhibit a strong interest in developing themselves in this area.

Indirectly, however, the feminists groups represented in this chapter do present alternative images of "woman as mother." In their condemnation of the church's manipulated image of Mary and the predominant subjugation of women in Peruvian society, these feminist voices assert that women can be everything that the church has held denied them. Their fight for women's reproductive rights suggests an image of woman in control of, instead of controlled by, motherhood.⁶³ By saying that these prominent images are not divinely ordained, but instead products of the socio-political dimension of religion, Peruvian feminists state that it is unnecessary to define womanhood or motherhood in

⁶³ In March, 1990 I attended a counselling session in a feminist organization in Lima. The woman in charge of reproductive rights explained to a Peruvian woman who had just undergone an abortion that it is important to be able to choose when you want to be a mother. As she spoke of her own abortion experience she held her stomach swollen some six months in pregnancy and smiled and said forcefully, "It's important to be a mother when you want!"

any particular, or patriarchal, way. By challenging the assumption that sexuality must always lead to pregnancy, these women also challenge the image of "woman as mother" which traditionally denies women's sexual pleasure. These images of "woman as mother" are based upon critique and rejection of cultural norms. Little has been done to rebuild an image or role model of women within the church, due to the widespread rejection of the church amongst feminists groups.

Recently, however, Talitha Cumi has explored the image of "feeling God in a different way" as stated in José María Arguedas book, Todas Las Sangres. In a small publication made by the group entitled, "Nuevas Expresiones de lo Sagrado, En Busqueda de Una Espiritualidad Feminista," (New Expressions of the Sacred, In Search of Feminist Spirituality) the group presents their perceptions of the sacred:

Spirit
Energy my energy
The continuation of the creation
The interdependence of all the natural elements

Friendship, solidarity, communication
(my translation).⁶⁴

An example of this liberated earth-bound perception of the sacred they cite in the following poem:

⁶⁴ "Espiritu / Energía mi energía
La continuación de la creación
La interdependencia de todos los elementos de la
naturaleza / Amistad, solidaridad, comunicación"
(Talitha Cumi 1989)

Poster of a mother with a photo of a "disappeared" son
The power of this woman to confront the "powerful."

The power of this woman is not the power of domination, it comes from inside in order to love, to confront the truth.

It brings forth collective love, solidarity. Pan flutes. The folklore, the music of the pan flute rises up from the earth to the heavens. The sound communicates, makes me forget, makes me identify.

It is born in feeling more advanced than the rational

The time. The clock has been a symbol of oppression. The seasons, the change of the moon and other expressions of the cycle of life are able to be symbols of the Sacred.

The music in the voices of women singing/ Songs of life, of energy...

The leadership of the youth. The potential of women to take consciousness of their situation and direct their energy to make a new way of relating (my translation).⁶⁵

These images of solidarity and potential within the poor women in Peru clearly share liberation theologians' concern for rebuilding a new social order, and from doing so from the basis of experience.

⁶⁵ "Poster de una madre, con foto de su hijo desaparecido. El poder de esta mujer para enfrentar "los poderes". El poder de esta mujer no es el poder de dominación, viene desde adentro para amar, para enfrentar con la verdad. Hace surgir amor colectivo, solidaridad. Zampoña. Lo folklórico, la musica de la zampoña surge de la tierra hacia el cielo. El sonido comunica, me hace olvidar, me hace identificar. Nace de los sentimientos mas allá de lo racional. El tiempo. El reloj ha sido un símbolo de opresión.

Las estaciones, el cambio de la luna y otras expresiones del ciclo de la vida pueden ser símbolos de lo Sagrado. La música en las voces de mujeres cantando. Canciones de vivencia, energía. El liderazge de la juventud. La potencialidad de las mujeres para tomar conciencia de su situación o dirigir sus energías hacia una nueva forma de relaciones (Talitha Cumi 1989)."

In this depiction of the sacred women are seen as the leaders, formally powerless, now capable of toppling the most powerful. Women are intimately connected with the earth and the intuitive. It is the inner energy of women and the traditional role they have played in the planting of the seed and weaving that are able, in Talitha Cumi's view, to change. This valuing of the oppressed in this respect reinforces Gutiérrez's work, especially The Power of the Poor in History. The idealization of the power of women echoes some of the sentiments of Mujer, Víctima de Opresión, Portadora de Liberación where women's oppression seems almost idealized.

Most important here, however, are Talitha Cumi's activities in relation to this statement. Though women's position is affirmed and given value, they do challenge the church's position concerning reproductive rights and inequality of the sexes. Talitha Cumi's imagining of "woman as mother" as potent and bringer forth of liberation cannot be criticized for affirming the status quo as is possible with the similar imaging of woman made by liberation theologians. The difference between the two groups is that Talitha Cumi's reflections do not end with this image of woman, as liberation theologians' reflections do, as Talitha Cumi condemns the injustices against women in the church and society.

It can be argued whether or not it is proper to segregate the characteristics predominantly known to be male and female, devaluing those such as rationality commonly perceived to be masculine and uphold characteristics such as intuitiveness commonly perceived to be feminine. By making such a division the image of God essentially defines and divides the sexes. "Women as mother" is a certain type of mother, an idealized femininity. By defining their perception of the sacred as earth bound, intuitive, and counteracting the rational, the group has limited women's possibilities to be other the norm.

The group views the existing societal order as against the will of the sacred because there it is dominated by male oppression, and denies women a public voice. The subsequent view of characteristics such as rationality as evil replicates the division between the sexes on the psychological level, thus alienating men as well as women. It is possible, however, that the group meant only to give value to characteristics that previously have been denigrated by the church and society, and to redefine and value women as in the image of the sacred.

Conclusions

The Peruvian feminist groups' critique of Mary does not differ greatly from the well known criticisms of Western

feminists such as Rosemary Radford Ruether. Their critique of the church's use of the images of Mary and Eve to oppress women is not simply an interpretation borrowed from Western feminist thinkers, however. These women's own history as Latin Americans within the Catholic church confirm these critiques. They simply find Western texts useful; helpful in interpreting their own reality. As Peru is a society more predominantly Catholic than most Western societies these critiques may be best, or exclusively, suited for their countries.

The manipulation of Mary's image, has lead the Peruvian populace to assume that there is no place for sexual pleasure apart from procreation, that women are innately inferior to men, and that women are valued only in their role as mothers. These religious symbols have also alienated women from the church because women can never completely relate to Mary, for they cannot be at once virgin and mother. "Woman as mother" is therefore limited to a life in the private realms of society, both in and out of the church. She is dominated by men and enslaved by her lack of control over her reproductive system. God's love for her must appear almost conditional, as she has no value apart from motherhood.

The Peruvian feminists' image of "woman as mother" in relation to Mary of Nazareth is based predominantly upon a critique and condemnation of the intentions of the existing

images of "woman as mother" and Mary within the church and society. The feminists' de-sacralization and demystification of the church's predominant female images is similar to the liberation theology movement's exploration of the socio-political dimension of all facets of society. Although Talitha Cumi's images of "woman as mother" can be criticized, it is important to realize that even though they are a Christian feminist group, their concentration has been on feminism as opposed to religion. It is possible, therefore, that their arguments reflect their bias toward feminism rather than Christianity. The difficulties with their arguments, in this light, may reflect their inexperience in theology-making rather than their intention to maintain divisions between the sexes.

CHAPTER FOUR

Women's Popular Organizations in Lima:

The Motivating Force of Poverty

In the preceding three chapters I have analyzed the images of "woman as mother" as expressed in three Peruvian groups' texts. For the most part, these images of "woman as mother" have been related to the image of Mary of Nazareth, in order that the religious movement, liberation theology, can be seen in contrast with other groups in the Peruvian context. As outlined in the introduction to this thesis, textual analysis of liberation theology and of women's reality has definite limitations, as it is impossible to verify to what extent particular texts reflect Peruvian societies. Nevertheless, texts are our only means of examining the movement and other dynamics of the Peruvian reality, making this obstacle unavoidable.

To complement this textual study, I now examine women's grassroots organizations in urban centres, with particular emphasis on Lima. Such a focus has been chosen to represent the reality of women's lives in Peru. Although there are various factors which constitute women's daily lives in the country, popular organizations have been chosen as exemplary of them, as this is the factor that has changed most rapidly

within recent years in respect to women. Popular organizations are also deserving of attention, I think, because they represent an alternative form of political organization in the country, and even more significantly, a social structure in which women play leading roles. After clarifying which specific group of women is my concern, this chapter outlines the grassroots movements in which these women participate. This chapter then examines the influence that the traditional church, the liberation theology movement, and the feminist movement have had upon these organizations.

1. Peruvian Women in a Socio-Economic Context

Cultural, economic, and political realities in Peru are even more diverse than the country is geographically disparate. Although the official language is Spanish, there are at least 14 other languages spoken in the jungle, and almost as many dialects of Quechua and Aymara in the Andes as there are mountains (Latin American Press 1985). Each major area of the country has its own way of cooking, dancing, and expressing religious belief, as well as its distinct pre-Incan civilization. Compounding this complexity is the current illegal cocaine production, which dominates particular areas of the east side of the Andes, and the two rebel groups, Sendero Luminoso and M.R.T.A.

(Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru). These rebel groups now control regions of the country's interior, and have caused many more regions to be classified as "emergency zones." Clearly it is impossible to refer to a unique Peruvian reality, and by extension, it is equally impossible to refer to Peruvian women in general.

Despite the many diverse situations in the country, the capital, Lima, now consisting of nearly seven million inhabitants, is a reality unto itself. Like many capital cities of non-industrialized countries, Lima is the centre of political and economic affairs. Although there is a distinct movement toward the regionalization of the country, Lima continues to dominate the national political agenda. In many ways, Peru is divided once again into those who live in cities and those who live in the rural settings. More accurately, it is divided into those who live in Lima and those who do not.

Because the provincial areas of the country are difficult and often dangerous to visit, this study is focused upon the urban reality, with particular emphasis on Lima where I lived for 12 months. Even though they may refer to Andean realities, the texts analyzed in this thesis are written by people who spend the majority of their time in the capital. To concentrate on the women in Lima therefore is not only obligatory but proves to be the most appropriate for this study because of the authors' similar

focus. This vicious circle, leading more and more studies to focus upon urban realities is clearly unfortunate, as the history and culture of Andean and Amazon regions of the country are equally as interesting as the history and culture of Lima.

Within the city's ever-expanding limits there exist many different classes of Peruvian women. Many studies of women's grassroots organizations conclude that women identify more as a member of an oppressed class than an oppressed gender (see Grandón 1987: 45).⁶⁶ Feminists such as Virginia Vargas admit that one cannot assume that oppression attributed to gender is sufficient to bridge the gap between women from different social classes. (Vargas 1989: 144).

In this chapter I will focus upon women of the various lower classes who for the most part live in shanty towns in the outskirts of the city. I have chosen this sector of

⁶⁶ The economic disparity amongst women clearly exemplified is in the reproductive side of their lives. In February, 1991, during the cholera outbreak in Peru, several television news programs focused upon the inadequacy of Limerion hospitals to deal with the epidemic. One broadcast focused specifically upon the lack of sanitation in certain maternity wards. One hospital did not have enough sheets. The women were forced to use beds contaminated by other women's blood. The hospital lacked space for newborns, and two babies were often forced to shared one space, back to back in a small incubator-like glass tray. They reported that, in some instances, two women are forced to share a bed after giving birth. Rich women and their children are never subject to such health risks, as adequate care is available for those who can afford private hospitals.

Lima's populace not only because it represents an ever-increasing percentage of the city's population, but also because it is the sector upon which liberation theologians and feminist groups claim to concentrate. Even though Lima will be the focus of this chapter, grassroots organizations in smaller urban centres are similar enough to those of the capital, that Lima can serve as representative of these organizations as a whole. This study intends to investigate the reality of lower class urban women's participation in grassroots organizations.

2. Urban Grassroots Organizations

Grassroots organizations constitute a new type of political organization in Peru, as they arise from needs which organized politics does not fulfill. Michel Rondeau (in the Ph.D. thesis he is currently working on through L'Université Laval in conjunction with El Instituto Bartolomé de Las Casas) identifies Peruvian grassroots organizations as situations in which people experience the more luxurious human rights. At the same time that they are fighting for their basic human rights, such as the right to food, shelter, and the freedom from torture, he states, they experience a true democratic process and the right to expression. Through grassroots organizations, he states, poor people who have never before had a political voice

experience democracy.⁶⁷ This alternative, spontaneous political option is all that is available to many Peruvians, because the economic measures taken by the ruling government do not take the people's needs into consideration.⁶⁸

Clubes de Madres:

The most common form of women's grassroots organizations in Peru are "Clubes de Madres" (Mother's Clubs) (Camphens 1988:26). Clubs de Madres began in the 1940s, arising from the Catholic Church's need to distribute aid. Charitable donations were given to women on the condition that they would do certain tasks to better their

⁶⁷ Taken from conversations I had with Michel Rondeau in January, 1990. While in Lima from May, 1989-May, 1990 Rondeau worked with CEBs and lived with a group of priests in Collique. Rondeau is currently working in Lima as the Director of SUCO for Peru. SUCO is the Quebec version of CUSO (or vice versa), a Canadian non-governmental organizations which sponsors technical help to non-industrialized countries in the form of co-operants. His thesis is not yet finished.

⁶⁸ The people's lack of confidence in the official political process is best seen in the recent trend for independents to run for government. For example, in the November, 1989 municipal elections Limenions chose Ricardo Belmont, a well known owner of a television station, for the city's mayor. The victory of Alberto Fujimori in the April, 1990 federal elections also reflects the people's lack of confidence in the political process, as Fujimori was virtually unknown two weeks before the elections. Fujimori's only virtue was that he promised not to implement the economic strategies promised by the right wing coalition, Fredemo. He did, however, implement them within a month after his inauguration. It appears that political parties are aware of the lack of trust the people have in them, and have opted to present independents as leaders, as can be seen in the party Fredemo that presented an independent author as leader.

community. Hubert Camphens states that these organizations on the one hand functioned as traditional independent forms of barrio organization, and in part as a mediatory device of the "clientalismo" ideology (26-7).

The clubs, in his opinion, did not aim to integrate the women into the larger organization of the barrio. Women were treated as grateful recipients of donations, and even though they were educated to perform certain tasks in the community, they were never allowed to participate in the organization of the groups (27). Consciousness-raising was never a priority in such organizations, Camphens asserts, and often women were forced to work long hours before they could receive the donations (27). According to Camphens, this inequity was particularly evident at the beginning of the economic crisis in 1978 when more foreign bodies began to send donations to Peru. Many women joined the groups at that time, as it was a prerequisite for receiving foreign aid.

Clubes de Mujeres:

In reaction to Clubes de Madres, in the 1980's many women formed Clubes de Mujeres (Women's Clubs), thereby asserting their identity apart from their traditional roles as mothers. These women still involved themselves in activities related to the survival needs of their community, but they also addressed gender issues:

The principle of autonomy emerged as the central factor in the formation of new women's organizations, since it would permit them their own social and political space and question the practices of neighborhood organizations, bureaucratic actions, and the political forms of clientalismo. It is the independent clubes de mujeres which in many instances, and among other functions, operate the comedores populares, cultivate gardens for the growth of their own food staples, function mini day care centers, or have started popular economic organizations for income generation (Camphens: 28)

Women's groups' autonomy has since evolved. In 1983 all the women's groups from Villa El Salvador held a convention, the result being the formation of the coalition group, FEPOMUVES (Federación de Popular Organizaciones de Mujeres de Villa El Salvador).

The second convention was held two years later, and there now exist five larger co-ordinating bodies within the coalition, that deal respectively with comedores populares, clubes de madres, clubes de mujeres, women's promotion, and women's education (Camphens: 28). The organization not only provides a greater amount of efficiency and networking within the barrio itself, but also facilitates the work of groups who wish to work in the area. The women have more control over foreign groups' work in their neighbourhoods as the coalition provides a certain amount of protection from the clientalismo approach, which effectively negates their struggle for autonomy. Through such an organization, women are able to actively involve themselves in the decision-making processes effecting their community, and to implicate

themselves in a manner that they never could within the context of obligation of the Clubes de Madres.

Comedores Populares:

The first Comedores Populares (common kitchens) appeared in Comas and El Augustino in Lima in the late 70s with an estimated 700 in operation in the city by 1986 (Grandón 1987: 7; Camphens: 29). The idea of a Comedor is quite simple. It is less expensive to cook and buy food, kerosene, and other cooking necessities as a group, than it is individually. A study of a Comedor done by CESIP, Centro de Estudios Sociales y Publicaciones, estimates that people save up to 17.2% when they cook together (CESIP 1988: 13).

Such groups often arise out of other women's groups, such as the clubs already mentioned. A woman from El Augustino describes the formation of her comedor as a gradual process, initiated in her Christian base community:

The economic situation was very bad, people were sick because from poor nutrition and T.B. and the prices of everything began to increase because of the acts of the Morales Bermudez government Therefore in 1978 we had our first meetings in the Christians community to see how we could attain food for the most needy families. First we thought of the cooperative consumption of the food, and then, later, the common kitchen. First the directors organized in order to attain the stove and utensils, creating a fund through activities ... Later we looked for the place to

have it. The common kitchen began to operate in the beginning of 1979 (my translation).⁶⁹

People also form Comedores informally amongst family members or neighbours. According to Camphens, comedores were first formed quite informally, as 15-20 families joined together to share different tasks of cooking. Then, he states, non-governmental organizations and the state became involved. They donated food and also imposed their own organizational structures (Camphens: 29). However, the objectives of the state often negate the work of the women (Camphens: 30). For example, many Comedores in Lima, are supported by a particular political party, and are obliged to hang political posters on their walls. The consciousness-raising that happens in the groups can in this way be undermined. Even though the group may learn that the policies of the party force them need to organize a comedor, they continue to support the party because it sustains the individual Comedor.⁷⁰ Considering that different groups,

⁶⁹ "La situación económica estaba muy mal, habían enfermedades como la desnutrición y la tuberculosis y comensaban a subir todas las cosas con los paquetazos de Bermudez... Entonces en el año 78 hicimos las primeras reuniones en la comunidad cristiana, para ver como conseguir alimentos para las familias más necesitadas. Primero pensamos en una cooperative de consumo de alimentos y luego en la idea del Comedor. Lo primero fue la formación de la directiva, para conseguir cocina y utensilios, creando un fondo a través de actividades: Luego la búsqueda de local. El Comedor comensó a funcionar a comienzos de 1979 (Grandón: 14)."

⁷⁰ This type of manipulation is possible in Peru because the people cannot easily look to the long term effect of something when they are just surviving the present.

either national or foreign, appear to be constantly trying to harness the forces of women working in popular organizations, women's groups coalitions such as the one in Villa El Salvador are even more necessary for women to achieve the goals established by their groups.

Alicia Grandón explains that comedores have been criticized for being effective ways of dealing with poverty without substantial impetus for social change. This criticism is not valid, in her view, as women participating in comedores have begun to organize small workshops. They are also often accompanied by other health and educational projects, she states. A woman who participates in a Comedor boasts of its various end goals:

The common kitchen is not only born because of hunger. Also, it attempts to organize women, and educate them to participate integrally as a director, a person living in the barrio, a woman, and as a mother. In order to enlighten them about where they live, and how they live as women. As an objective, the comedor not only enlightens them about hunger, but also helps them discover what their rights are, and to learn to defend themselves (my translation).⁷¹

That Comedores provide contexts in which women can integrate into the community is most evident in the actions of the Comisión Nacional de Comedores. In 1988 this commission made a proposal to the government concerning food

⁷¹ "El Comedor no nace sólo por el hambre. También se trataba de organizar a las mujeres y que se capacitaran para participar integralmente como dirigente, pobladoras, mujer, madre. Para despertar dónde vivían y como mujeres. Como objetivo, no sólo ver lo del hambre, descubrir cuáles eran nuestros derechos, aprender para defendernos" (Grandón: 23).

subsidies. The group asked the government not to subsidize enterprises that favour importation of food from the exterior. Instead they asked the government to directly subsidize food produced in the country, in order to lessen the country's dependency on foreign aid (Comisión Nacional de Comedores 1988: 9-11). Such a request not only reflects the women's political awareness, but also shows how these women have found a place to voice themselves on the national level.

Vaso de Leche Program:

The Vaso de Leche (Glass of Milk) Program was initiated in 1984 by Lima's municipal government lead by Alfonso Barrantes. The program is a system of milk distribution, whereby donations of milk are given to women's groups. The program aims to ensure that children will at least have one glass of milk a day. The program, often through Clubes de Madres or Mujeres or Comedores Populares, organized some 100,000 women by 1985 (Camphens:30).

The Vaso de Leche Program, according to Camphens, is a rare case of the government working with the community (30). Barrantes is a special type of politician. He appears to be one of the few politicians in the country that is not interested in his own financial gain and power.⁷² Each

⁷² Barrantes ran unsuccessfully for the federal elections in April, 1990. His failure is largely accredited to the fact that the Left party split into two parties shortly before the

time municipal government changes, however, the program is threatened. In 1986 the new government wanted to dismantle it, but 7,500 representatives of Comites de Vaso de Leche took to the streets to protest, and ultimately saved the program.⁷³

Like Comedores Populares, the program includes women in the predominantly male-dominated barrio organization. Women increase their awareness of nutrition, at the same time that they build solidarity and learn organizational skills. The fact that women are able to successfully defend the program shows how participation in the program has empowered them.

Comunidades Eclesiales de Base:

Comunidades eclesiales de base or CEBs (Christian base communities) are groups of 5 to 25 people who meet weekly to talk about their social situation and study the Bible. They are what liberation theologians refer to as grassroots organizations within the church. In the parish, La Parroquia de la Visitación de Nuestra Señora, which I participated in from October, 1989 until April, 1990, there

election and was perceived as weak. His political slogan was "Vote for the 'frejolito' (the little bean)", a humble symbol suited to his humble character. On election day most political candidates went to vote in fancy cars, with chauffeurs, escorted, and with many body guards. Barrantes drove himself to the voting station in his red Volkswagen "Bug".

⁷³ The present mayor of Lima, Ricardo Belmont, is also threatening to cut the program. He claims to have forgotten about it in his budget. The issue is not yet resolved.

were approximately fifteen such groups.⁷⁴ The leaders and other interested people would meet every Friday night for a Bible Study course. The knowledge acquired at such meetings was taken back to the smaller CEB groups. Every parish, however, has its own way of working with these groups. For example, CEBS sometimes arise out of Catechises Familiar groups.⁷⁵

Although comunidades eclesiales de base are not exclusively groups in which only women participate,

... it is well known that in the CEBs women form the greater part of the people, not only as mere members, but as active participants in co-ordination, animation, catechises, liturgy; bible groups; etc. ... (my translation).⁷⁶

⁷⁴ This parish is probably one of the most committed to liberation theology in Lima. The parish priest, José Mizotti, works very hard to facilitate the people's ability to express their own views of their reality and religion. In early 1990 he left to study in Brazil for six months. Also fortunate is the fact that a number of priests working in the parish share similar views. There exist parishes in which priests and brothers have conflicting political views, some of which are pro-liberation theology and some which are not.

⁷⁵ Catechises familiar is a program where parents and children simultaneously learn catechises as the children are going through the stages of first communion, and confirmation. In the home the parents reinforce the education the children receive in their catechises meetings. The aim of this program is to build a stronger bond between parent and child and to increase the parents' role in their children's education.

⁷⁶ "... es bien sabido que en las CEBs ellas forman el contingente mayor, no sólo como miembros simplemente, sino como participantes de los servicios de coordinación, animación, catecheses, liturgia; círculos bíblicos; etc. ..." (Cavalcanti 1987: 4).

That women participate in and lead these groups more often than men is unfortunately not always reflected in the writings of liberation theologians. In an article describing women's participation in CEBs, Tereza Cavalcanti observes that even though women are the majority of those leading CEBs, they are not adequately represented at leaders' regional or international meetings (Cavalcanti 1987: 4). Cavalcanti postulates that women's husbands may not allow them to participate in these meetings.

Through their participation in the meetings, women become sensitized to their oppression due to gender. The meetings stress critical, independent thinking, concerning both biblical exegesis as well as personal interpretation of their daily life experiences (Cavalcanti: 6). As they learn to understand and denounce the injustices they suffer due to class, women become conscientized of the injustices they suffer because of gender. Although women are able to express themselves and find value within the CEBs, the problem of inadequate representation indicates that women are limited by CEBs, in so far as they are not explicitly a women's organization. As a gender women have not fully integrated into the community through such groups.

3. The Motivating Force to Women's Popular Organizations

Since the commencement of the economic crisis in 1975 (what Grandón refers to as "the beginning of the end"), the Peruvian family has been limited to survival strategies, as survival is challenged by the economic crises. These challenge sex role stereotypes and the division of labour in the family. The traditional role of women as administrator and organizer of the family's basic needs, inside the private realm of domestic life, has meant that poor women (as opposed to poor men) are always the first to realize that the money is worth less and less. She is the first to realize simply because she can no longer meet the demands of her traditionally defined sex role (Grandón: 13).

The impossibility of fulfilling the demands of her traditional role, drives Peruvian women out of the home, states Grandón, leading them first to the neighbourhood organizations (14). The housewife leaves the house to join groups of solidarity, and to work in the community to earn a salary which will complement her husband's income. It is evident that the way in which these women organize is dictated both by their class and by their gender, as economic needs challenge their traditional sex and social role (Grandón: 15).

Interestingly, it is women's traditional place in the private sector, that has forced them to enter the public

sector in the specific way in which they have. The kitchen has literally gone into the street. As domestic chores such as cooking take on greater value in the public sphere, woman and motherhood gain greater recognition and value.

Feminist Groups:

In the 1980s the women's movement was expressed in two currents: the feminist movement and women's popular organizations. Although the feminist groups have supported and worked with various popular organizations, they are by far out numbered by them, and are thus incapable of making a significant direct impact upon them. For example, in 1986 there were an estimated 800 Comedores and 7500 Comités de Vaso de Leche mobilizing approximately 100,000 women. By 1988 there were 300 workshops and health promotion groups. In comparison, by 1985 there were only ten feminist groups in the capital and four in the other departments. (Grandón: 7)

It is impossible to measure, however, how much feminists' publications, lobbying actions for reproductive rights, and confrontation of culturally accepted sex role stereotypes has effected the lives of female populace in Peru. Any affect that they are able to have on the masses of popular women, for the most part, has to be indirect. Their successes in changing laws will affect the lives of poor women generally. Even though feminist groups, such as

"El Centro Pozo," work directly with some of Lima's poorest women in the City Centre, they are not large enough to qualify as a motivating factor for social change.

Liberation Theologians:

Liberation theologians, through the very nature of their organization, have a greater ability to work with popular women. Compared to feminist organizations, they have greater scope for contact with poor women, both directly and indirectly. Their texts reflect upon popular experiences, but their influence extends to the actions of numerous religious workers active in poor areas. Although it is again impossible to know how many CEBs exist in Lima, I do not doubt that they outnumber feminist organizations.

Liberation theologians effect women's popular organizations by encouraging them and by facilitating their formation. Parishes support organizations and assist in the distribution of foreign aid. Also, people already organizing in CEBs are more apt to organize in further ways. Texts dealing with women's participation in such groups, and lectures given to people at the "summer courses" in February, 1990 gave women's work a divine seal of approval, by identifying these grassroots organizations as ways in which people affirm their belief in a God of Life. Again, it is difficult to measure to what extent such approbation affects women.

Traditional Church:

It is important, however, to put women's popular organizations into perspective, for even though 36% of Limenion homes are supported by women and children as well as men, 75% of women do not participate in popular organizations (Grandón: 83). Though liberation theologians may affect women's lives to some extent, and feminist groups may encourage or enlighten them in some measure, the majority of women are affected the most by the traditional cultural norms supported by the conservative faction of the church.

Without even trying to affect women's lives, the traditional church, with nearly 500 years of dominating force in the country, continues to affect women's lives the most. Perplexedly, the traditional division of labour, according to Grandón, is what motivates women to form the types of popular organizations that they do. The traditional church, in this light, appears to be the most effective factor in motivating women to enter the public life in the form of popular organizations. In this light the status quo is the motivating factor for the change of the status quo.

One must not forget, however, that the majority of women do not react to the traditional image of motherhood in the way that women organizing in popular organizations do. The traditional image of woman as provider and protector of

her family proposed by the church is also an image of woman as mother who does not challenge the norms of the church and the society (see Chapter One). It is to the extent that women partially break with this traditional image of woman as silent at the same time that they maintain the traditional image of woman as provider that they are motivated to participate in grassroots organizations.

Conclusions

Traditional church and culture aside however, the most significant factor influencing women to organize, become concientized, and voice their concerns publicly, is hunger. Unfortunately it does not appear that Peru will escape economic hardships in the following years. Women will therefore be forced to leave the private realm to maintain their families' survival. Though this can be called liberation in one sense, it results from such a widespread oppression that these women's efforts make them appear as David before Goliath.

CONCLUSION

Peruvian liberationists' image of woman as mother falls short of Peruvian feminists' demands, as the former avoids certain issues such as reproductive rights. Although the traditionalists deal with these issues, they do so through a non-liberating method of making theology: a belief in an unchanging "divine moral law," and an advocacy of a personal relationship with God divorced from daily experiences. While avoiding specific issues of women's rights, liberationists do challenge the methodology of "talking about God" posited by the traditionalists, the very methodology which leads to an emphasis on women's body as sinful and on virginal motherhood as the preeminent feminine ideal. Only indirectly, then do liberationists respond to issues such as reproductive rights. Although liberation theology does not meet all the challenges voiced by the feminist movement, then, its methodology does not conflict with feminist concerns, whereas it does conflict with traditionalists in both its methodology and its bias toward the poor. The image of woman as mother expressed in Peruvian liberationist texts has more in common therefore with textual images produced by feminists within the country than it has with those produced by Peruvian traditionalists.

1. A Liberating Methodology:

Essentially Peruvian feminists' criticize liberation theology for accomplishing the goals that it has set for itself. As already outlined in Chapter Two, liberation theologians' lack of direct concern for certain issues is perhaps due to their compromised political situation within the church. Ultimately their circular methodology mitigates this apparent deficiency, as liberationists don't claim to be flawless. Gutiérrez's recent focus on the figure, Mary of Nazareth, and his depiction of her as foremost a woman as subject, and the subsequent image of motherhood as symbolic of solidarity, is perhaps the beginning of a new phase of liberation theology in Peru, where reflections upon the poor's experiences indicate sensitivity to various forms of oppression.

Interestingly, Peruvian feminists have not yet criticized the language liberation theologians use in reference to God. Liberation theologians still refer to God as "He" even though they have included inclusive language in all other areas of their writing. Although those who refer to God as "Mother/Father" or "He/She/Being" could assume that the image of God as "He" supports a sexist theological mindset, I propose that liberation theology's reference to God as "He" is at least less sexist than the traditional reference to God as "He." In accordance with its

methodology based upon experience and its preference for the poor, liberation theology imagines God alive "... in the bosom of the people" (see Gervais 1984). This emphasis upon God's intimacy with the poor negates the literalness of the male pronoun. God, by liberation theology's estimation, is not merely distinct from humanity, an all powerful character waving a magic wand over the earth from the heavens. Rather, God's power comes from within humankind, present in the solidarity amongst people. The image of God as "He," in this light, is liberated from the divisions between "Himself" and humankind, even though it still is not completely accessible to women.

Most disconcerting about the Peruvian liberationists' imaging of woman as mother is the limited reflection concerning women's participation in grassroots organizations. Liberationists identify women's group organizations as affirming belief in a God of Life and thereby distinguish the women in these organizations as spiritual leaders. Liberation theologians do not question, however, the particularities of women's situations of oppression that have caused them to organize in the way they do, nor do they question how women can become further liberated through these organizations. They have chosen to reflect upon a select part of the experience of women in grassroots organizations. They appear content to affirm the present, as opposed to using this present experience as a

pivotal point from which to move forward, or to analyze the reasons why women, as opposed to men, are organizing in this way in relation to their situations of class and gender struggle.

As well, although they affirm women's grassroots organizations, the liberationists appear content to allow them to develop spontaneously, as they do not provide Christian reflections upon the complete past, present, and future elements of women's experience, but rather choose to highlight only the present. Their theology making in this sense is stagnant, and verges on being merely descriptive in nature. Essentially, they are not fulfilling the demands posited by their own methodology as they have closed their eyes to certain aspects of women's experiences. It is possible that they do not wish to acknowledge certain negative aspects of these grassroots organizations out of fear that acknowledgement of these realities would not benefit the liberation of the poor. Such a choice to subjugate one form of liberation (gender related) to another (class related) is contradictory to Gutiérrez's statement that the liberation of classes need not be juxtaposed to the liberation of the sexes (Gutiérrez 1989: 313).

2. How Can We Believe in A God of Life?

Both the focus of Gutiérrez's latest book, El Dios de La Vida, and the 1989-90 summer courses have focused upon a question which Gutiérrez identifies as central to liberation theology. In Gutiérrez's words

... the great pastoral, and therefore theological, question is: How is it possible to tell the poor, who are forced to live in conditions that embody a denial of love, that God loves them? This is equivalent to asking: How can we find a way of talking about God amid the suffering and oppression that is the experience of the Latin American poor? How is it possible to do theology "while Ayacucho lasts"?⁷⁷ (1988: xxiv)

In El Dios de La Vida Gutiérrez's poses the same question in a different way: how can we believe in a God of Life when all that can be seen is death? Because liberation theology is an experience-based theology the inquiry of this thesis must be considered in relation to the reality which most all Peruvians and Latin Americans live: what does liberation for women in liberation theology mean in relation to the challenge presented by belief in a God of Life and Love?

A particular situation that leaves a strong impression upon me is a case documented by Amnesty International in the book, Perú, Entre Dos Fuegos (Peru, Between Two Fires). In the book, Peruvian people living in rural emergency zones

⁷⁷ "... (Ayacucho, a city in Peru that has been buffeted by poverty and violence, is a Quechuan name meaning 'the corner of the dead.')

 (Gutiérrez 1988: 177, footnote 24)"

are presented as caught between the crossfire of the rebels and military. It is common, according to the book, for rebels to come into a village and kill all the people in positions of authority (leaders of town council, for example), and for the military to arrive later and murder numerous more people, hoping to kill one terrorist amongst twenty. It is customary in such cases for the military to return and rape all the women related to the men who they have killed. In Perú, Entre Dos Fuegos one case is documented of a mother and daughter who are gang raped by seven policemen, and who both become pregnant as a result of the violations (1989: 23). After reading the book, a friend asked me the very question to which liberation theologians try to respond: How can you believe in God when this exists?

This question becomes increasingly more difficult for me to answer the more that I realize how widespread situations such as this one documented case are, and how many other equally dehumanizing situations there are in Peru, and for that matter, in most parts of the world. Such situations have occurred throughout history, and what happened to that particular woman and her daughter actually reenacts the Spaniards' treatment of indigenous women. I have come to conclude that if a person is not actively involved in changing the social order, it is next to impossible to look at the reality of the world and still

believe that life is worth living. As people find it increasingly more difficult to close their eyes to what is happening in the world today, they need to reevaluate the traditional images of God and humankind, which contribute to present oppression. To the extent that a person does not actively express his/her love to others in community, s/he must ignore the world's injustices. This is how I account for the traditionalists' ignorance of people and their surroundings. They do not see what is before them because to do so would force them to act. I find it amazing that people living in a country that has so many visible human rights violations can continue to ignore them so efficiently.

Although I, as an outsider who has the power to leave the country, have reacted to this particular situation with despair, Peruvian women such as this woman and her daughter, cannot afford the luxury of atheism. Liberation theology, in this light, does not act as an opium to silence the poor's concerns or to mask the reality of the injustices from which they suffer, but rather supports people to change their situations of death through building solidarity with one another. It is through building solidarity that people can affirm their belief in a God of Life, and essentially, continue to believe in the value of life. This hope in the power of God's embodiment in the poor is expressed in the song, "Good News," sung in many Peruvian churches:

Good News

They will fall
those who oppress my people
They will fall
those who eat their bread
without having sweated for it

They will fall
Those who have searched out my people
like the sun falling on its shadow
Good news! Good News! For my people!

He who wishes to hear
let him hear
he who wishes to see
Let him see, let him see and hear
all that is going on in the midst
of a people beginning
to walk ahead

No longer is your back broken with sorrow
Too long you have waited for
the moment that has now arrived

In your bosom, my people,
there is a God
who goes hidden
but with a strength
that has raised up
your countenance
that has been asleep

A new day dawns
and the fields will turn green again
New men are appearing
from a new land they are nurturing

Their voices, like thunder,
are breaking the silence
and their songs are giving new hope
And there is a God who goes along
content (Gervais 1984: iv)

The hope expressed in this song is illogical when seen in relation to the magnitude of the injustices these people face, but it is as essential to sustaining human life as food and water as without this hope life would not be worth

living. Liberation theology, in this light, is a theology based upon a need socially conscious people have: the need for hope and belief in life in general, and thereby the belief in a God of Life and Love.

In respect to the broader question, "Is there liberation for women in the liberation theology movement?," it cannot be denied that there is liberation for women in the liberation theology movement. It is women who need this theology, the empowering images of solidarity, the most, as it is they who suffer the greatest from injustices. The difficulty of reconciling oneself to the injustices in society makes it understandable why liberation theologians in the Peruvian case study have difficulty admitting many of the questionable reasons why women are present in grassroots organizations. Although it is difficult for liberationists to deal with these problems they must be recognized, as it is through such recognition of injustices that people will be forced to create solidarity; essentially it is to the extent that injustices are recognized, that they can be overcome.

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