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1968: A historiography of a New Reformation in Latin America

Mario I. Aguilar

During the year 1968 the world seemed to have been an unhappy one despite the free culture of hedonism, music and celebration symbolized by the hippies and those who found finally their own freedom within society. Part of the unhappy and defiant world of 1968 expressed itself through the many protests and marches against the establishment that took place in Paris and in the United States. In Paris, students and staff of the university protested against inequality and discrimination while the United States saw a full-blown social movement for peace and against the Vietnam War that dominated the life of university students involved in an ever-growing peace movement against the threat of nuclear weapons and the hegemony of the United States within the Cold War. The other part of the population already lived in fear of self-destruction due to the proliferation of nuclear weapons and the experience of the Cuban missile crisis in 1962.

This paper explores the ideological, social and religious changes triggered within Latin America at that time and particularly those that were the result of the 1968 meeting of bishops in Medellín, Colombia.¹ That meeting included the papal visit of Paul VI to Colombia (the first papal visit to Latin America), the influential standby for the poor and the marginalized by the Jesuits of Latin America as well as the growing sense of a new process of «revolution in freedom» that was taking place in Chile with the ever-growing support for the socialist project of the president-to-be Salvador Allende.²

¹ The author's most recent publications on Latin America include seven volumes of *A Social History of the Catholic Church in Chile* (2004–2011), *Religion and Politics in Pinochet's Chile: The Case of Bishops Enrique Alvear and Fernando Ariztía* (2010), *The Historiography of the Chilean Commission on Prison and Torture 2003–2009* (2010), *The Historiography of the Patio 29: General Cemetery Santiago, Chile 1973–2009* (2010), *Identification of Human Remains (N.N.) at Patio 29, General Cemetery Santiago, Chile, December 2009* (2010), and *The Ovens of Lonquén: Historiography, Memory and Human Rights in Chile 1973–2010*.

² Some of these arguments have been developed at length in Mario I. Aguilar, *The History and Politics of Latin American Theology*, 3 volumes, London 2007–2008.

This paper argues that a new reformation was taking place in Latin America, triggered by religious values and concern for the poor. This religious reformation relocated and supported socio-political processes by left-wing coalitions that found their reason of existence in the Cuban Revolution and the figures of the Argentinean fighter Ernesto Ché Guevara and the Colombian Catholic priest Camilo Torres, both of them killed in battle with the security forces of Bolivia and Colombia.

The Kairos of Medellín

Following the completion of Vatican II in 1965 the Latin American Bishops' Conference headed by the progressive Chilean Bishop Manuel Larraín scheduled a general meeting of Latin American Bishops at Medellín (Colombia) that took place in 1968. The meeting coincided with a time of questioning about poverty and injustice in Latin America and with the start of a period in which military regimes became more the norm rather than the exception.³ The preparations at local diocesan level for Medellín were intense and those leading the deliberations at continental level were not the theologians but the pastoral bishops who in the case of Brazil were already experiencing a systematic violation of human rights since the military had taken charge of the Brazilian government in 1964.

Within this difficult political context the Latin American countries were responding to the implementation of the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II) with enthusiasm and supported by a committed Catholic laity that had been heavily influenced by John XXIII's *Pacem in Terris* (1963) and Paul VI's *Populorum Progressio* (1967). The ideas contained in both encyclicals spoke of the possibility of a just order in society but an order that had to consider development rather than armed struggle as its chore value for an economic stability that provided the possibility of restoring dignity to all nations and to all human beings.

The genesis of Latin American liberation theology coincided with developments within a theology of inculturation in Africa and the Christian dialogue with world religions in Asia.⁴ However, within those globalized developments a

³ For a detailed analysis of the relation between church and state at the period and within different Latin American countries see Jeffrey Klaiber SJ, *The Church, Dictatorships, and Democracy in Latin America*, Maryknoll 1998.

⁴ At the theological level African and Latin American theologians encountered each other through the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) and the first period of their work was coordinated by Enrique Dussel and François Houtart, see a useful historical overview in Enrique Dussel, *Theologies of the «Periphery» and the «Centre»: Encounter or Confrontation?*, in: Claude Geffré/Gustavo Gutiérrez/Virgil Elizondo (eds.), *Different Theologies, Common Responsibility, Babel or Pentecost?*, Concilium, 171 (1984/1), Edinburgh, 87–97, see also: EATWOT, *The Emergent Gospel*, Maryknoll 1976. For a theological overview see Theo Witvliet, *A Place in the Sun: An Introduction to Liberation Theology in the Third World*, London 1985. An Asian Christianity as a Christian project was more problematic; numbers of Christians in Asia, with the exception of the Philippines, remain small and the post-Vatican II discussions on salvation within the world religions created more than an impasse between those who adhered to a Christ centric option (exclusivists)

Peruvian priest, Gustavo Gutiérrez, became the face of liberation theology and helped other priests' reflections vis-à-vis the implementation of Vatican II. Those priests were trying to develop a systematic framework that connected the life of the Latin American poor, development theory and a divine sense of history, all under an umbrella of theological and material liberation.⁵ *A Theology of Liberation* (1971) became the classic theological monograph; however, many other theologians started working on Christology, ecclesiology, soteriology, the history of the Church and the role of the Basic Christian communities.⁶ The final documents of Medellín supported that theological program by reiterating the materiality of God's salvation and by encouraging an ecclesial immersion in the life of the materially poor, the marginalized and those who were the victims of social injustice due to the fact that societies had created unjust structures included by the Latin American bishops under the umbrella of «structural sin».⁷

The development of Latin American theology has an enormous complexity but its genesis can be traced to the European reflection by Gustavo Gutiérrez and Juan Luis Segundo SJ in France, where both studied at the time when John XXIII (1959) had called the council and had spoken of «a church of the poor».⁸ Juan Luis Segundo SJ and Gustavo Gutiérrez had a different pastoral experience and that experience shaped what Segundo called «two kinds of liberation theology».⁹ Thus, for Gutiérrez and his life in the slums the poor and the marginalized were at the centre of God's work because they represented the incarnation of God while theology as a reflection was a «second act». The option for the poor, a theological option meant for Gutiérrez that Jesus in his life expressed a real closeness to them and liberation theology arose out of

«our better understanding of the depth and complexity of the poverty and oppression experienced by most of humanity; it is due to our perception of the economic, social, and cultural mechanisms that produce that poverty; and before all else, it is due to the new light which the word of the Lord sheds on that poverty».¹⁰

and those who understood the world religions as places where God could save (inclusivists), see Paul F. Knitter, *No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes towards the World Religions*. London 1985.

⁵ For historical data on his life see Sergio Torres, Gustavo Gutiérrez. A historical sketch, in: Marc H. Ellis/Otto Maduro (eds.), *The Future of Liberation Theology. Essays in Honor of Gustavo Gutiérrez*, Maryknoll 1989, 95–101.

⁶ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Teología de la liberación. Perspectivas*, Salamanca 1999 and Lima 1971; for a full review of the theological works of 18 Latin American theologians see Mario I. Aguilar, *The History and Politics of Latin American Theology*, vols. 1-2, London 2007.

⁷ See Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops 1968, *The Church in the Present-Day Transformation of Latin America in the Light of the Council II Conclusions*, Washington 1970.

⁸ For a comprehensive history of liberation theology and of some of the most prominent theologians of liberation see Aguilar, *The History and Politics* (see footnote 2).

⁹ Juan Luis Segundo SJ, *Two Theologies of Liberation*, Toronto 22 March 1983, in: Alfred T. Hennelly (ed.), *Liberation Theology. A Documentary History*, Maryknoll 1990, 353–66.

¹⁰ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Option for the Poor*, in: Ignacio Ellacuría SJ/Jon Sobrino SJ (eds.), *Mysterium Liberationis. Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology*, Maryknoll/North Blackburn 1993, 235–250, at 250.

For Segundo, who had experienced pastoral work with the educated elites, liberation theology remained within the realm of the educated theologians who through their pastoral ministry passed some fresh ideas about the implementation of Vatican II to the laity and to the Catholic faithful in parishes. Those ideas reflected Segundo's own work with reflection groups, university students and young professionals and his own commitment to a systematic investigation of theological themes at the service of the Church.

There is no contradiction between the role of the theologian in Gutiérrez and Segundo's work but certainly Gutiérrez work triggered numerous theological writings that used Marxism as a hermeneutical tool in order to explore social realities. Within the context of the 1970s Christians and Marxists had encountered each other in the same project of challenging unjust social structures; Christians following the values of the Kingdom of God, Marxists following the ideals of a revolution in which the people and the masses would be equal through further revolutions inspired by the Cuban Revolution (1959). The radicalization of the Latin American theologians coincided with the rising of Christians that equated the Gospel with a socialist political project, the so-called Christians for Socialism, and the consequent persecution of pastoral agents by the military in Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, El Salvador and Guatemala.

The optimism of the Council Fathers, and the rich documents that reincorporated the Church into the contemporary world, created an optimistic and exciting atmosphere in Latin America. However, there was no way in which all the different pastoral agents were going to act and think in the same way. There was the need to renew the Christian communities but there was also the need to outline economic development and a better distribution of wealth within society. In this sense, the complexity of the task of the bishops' reflection in Medellín was enormous and the dissemination of their own pastoral ideas necessary and much wanted by religious sisters, lay people and particularly the grass-roots communities.

The means to achieve that social and economic change were of concern to Christians and to Marxists alike, and therefore within a post-Cuban revolution period a few Christian communities and a few priests understood the «signs of the times» as calling them to join Latin American groups that wanted to foster violent revolutions. That was the case of Fr. Camilo Torres Restrepo, a Colombian priest that was to become a symbol of the possible Christian commitment to Latin American revolutions. Already at the time of the Council Camilo Torres had developed the idea that the revolutionary struggle could be a Christian and a priestly activity. His influence was large in Colombian society because he himself came from a well-to-do family but also because he was involved with students at the National University of Colombia. Cardinal Luis Concha moved him from the university to a suburban parish where he started attacking the hierarchy of the Church by suggesting that they were part of the Colombian oligarchy, a group that according to him impeded the formation of a more just society in Colombia. In June 1965 he asked to be relieved from his priestly duties and in November 1965 he joined the Colombian guerrilla, the Ejército de Liberación Nacional. Torres was killed on the 15th of February 1966 and became an icon for many other Christians in Latin America.

Within that context of ongoing change and political challenges Paul VI travelled to Bogotá, Colombia in 1968, in order to open the 39th International Eucharistic Congress. The first visit by a Pope to Latin America was seen as a great moment for a growing Church. Thus, leading Latin American bishops such as Cardinal Silva Henríquez of Chile felt excitement about the Pope's visit to Latin America and saw the visit as a service to all.¹¹ The «continent of hope» was the best ground for the implementation of Vatican II and Silva Henríquez felt that finally the servant of the servants of God was arriving to visit the poor of Latin America as the leader of a servant Church. The meeting of Latin American bishops in Colombia was to set the guidelines for the implementation of Vatican II in Latin America and the final document of Medellín was to vindicate the demands by those protesting against the pope's visit rather than to crush their pastoral dreams. It is possible to argue that without the arrival of Paul VI the meeting of all Latin American bishops at Medellín would not have had the same strength and the same impact on the pastoral life of the Church in Latin America.

Thus, on the 21st of August 1968 Silva Henríquez travelled to Colombia in order to await the Pope's arrival on the following day. Paul VI during his visit to Colombia ratified the winds of change given by Vatican II, the support of the Church to the poor and their just causes, and he condemned any advocacy of violence in order to achieve a just society in Latin America. The visit by Paul VI coincided with the celebration of the International Congress in Bogotá between 18 and 25 August 1968. Unlike previous Eucharistic Congresses in Buenos Aires and Sao Paulo the Colombian one was a celebration of the Christian communities under the motto *Vinculum Caritatis*.¹² During the Eucharistic Congress the pope, addressing peasants, stressed his commitment and that of the whole church to defend the plight of the poor, to proclaim human and Christian dignities, to denounce injustices and abuses against peasants and to foster initiatives and programs that supported peoples and their development.¹³ In summary, the pope reaffirmed an ongoing ecclesial understanding in Latin America: the theme of the poor as a sacramental presence of Christ.¹⁴ The pope warned those attending the celebrations about the danger of putting their trust in violence or revolution.¹⁵ It cannot be underestimated that this was the first time that the pope visited Latin America and that no other pope had journeyed outside Europe in order to physically be with the sick and the orphans.¹⁶

¹¹ Silva Henríquez gave the following thoughts in an interview with U.S. News & World Report: «Este proceso, válido para toda la Iglesia, se singulariza y reviste de connotación particular en América Latina. Continente en vías de desarrollo, el servicio eclesial a América Latina se concreta en un servicio al desarrollo, entendido en la acepción de Populorum Progressio: de condiciones menos humanas, hacia un humanismo integral, que incluye el don de la fe», *Memorias II*: 137.

¹² Josep-Ignasi Saranyana, director and Carmen-José Alejos Grau, coordinator, *Teología en América Latina*, vol. III: El siglo de las teologías latinoamericanistas 1899–2001, Madrid/Frankfurt a.M. 2002, 124.

¹³ Saranyana/Alejos Grau, *Teología en América Latina* (see footnote 12), 124.

¹⁴ Saranyana/Alejos Grau, *Teología en América Latina* (see footnote 12), 125.

¹⁵ Saranyana/Alejos Grau, *Teología en América Latina* (see footnote 12), 126.

¹⁶ Saranyana/Alejos Grau, *Teología en América Latina* (see footnote 12), 126.

Paul VI inaugurated the second general meeting of Latin American Bishops at Medellín at the cathedral in Bogotá on 24 August and returned to Rome. Those attending the Medellín conference were 137 bishops with right to vote and 112 delegates and observers.¹⁷ Thus, The Medellín conference was a fruitful opportunity for renewal and many of the concepts outlined in the final document were new additions to the social doctrine of the Church, e.g. «a truly human economics», «institutionalised violence», and «sinful structures».

The Impact of Medellín

Thus, it is at Medellín in 1968 that the theological movement of a Latin America driven by lay unpublished theologians began.¹⁸ The Church in Latin America had to ask questions about their religious practice within difficult political circumstances and aided by the theological reflection of Gutiérrez the bishops did not separate religion and politics, but provided a political response of commitment to political change and the defence of human rights. Virgilio Elizondo has argued, for example, that the transformative impact of the Medellín Conference on the church's pastoral practice and theology was far greater than that exercised by any other council of the church. No particular dogmas or confessions of faith were questioned or challenged – Protestant or Catholic. Instead, the whole edifice of Constantinean Christian thought, imagery, and symbolism was radically challenged in the name of Christianity itself. What was initiated was not a new academic or philosophical theology, but the transformation of the very structures and methods of doing theology. To be faithful and authentic, Christian theology would have to emerge out of the spiritual experience of the believing community grappling with its history and responding to its contemporary situation. The subsequent pastoral implementation of Medellín was very different in different Latin American countries but with the exception of Argentina and Colombia created the necessary pastoral and theological reflection as to challenge state oppression understood as «structural sin». For example, in the case of Chile the bishops, whenever needed, challenged the military regime of President Pinochet while in neighbouring Argentina there was an avoidance of any prophetic denunciation in the name of the Gospel.¹⁹

Among the groups that were going through a renewal and a Latin American Reformation were men and women religious who already had been encouraged by the reflections and the 1968 public declaration by the Jesuits on their life style and their pastoral work throughout Latin America. Thus, when the Provincials of all the Jesuit provinces of Latin America met in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 6–14 May 1968 they reflected on their view of mission and their positioning within

¹⁷ Saranyana/Alejos Grau, *Teología en América Latina* (see footnote 12), 126.

¹⁸ Emergence of a World Church and the irruption of the poor, in: Gregory Baum (ed.), *The Twentieth Century. A Theological Overview*, Maryknoll 1999, 108.

¹⁹ See Mario I. Aguilar, *A Social History of the Catholic Church in Chile*, vol. I: *The First Period of the Pinochet Government 1973–1980*, Lewiston/Queenston/Lampeter 2004.

Latin America. As a result of their deliberations they decided to reiterate their involvement «in the temporal life of humankind».²⁰ However, within the particular context of Latin America their statement for a larger involvement within a movement that could change unjust structures and to be with the people was very strong and very down to earth. There was no high theology within the document but a challenge to personal lives and community activities with an added social and religious utopia. In a central passage of that document they asserted:

«In all our activities, our goal should be the liberation of humankind from every sort of servitude that oppresses it: the lack of life's necessities, illiteracy, the weight of sociological structures which deprive it of personal responsibility over life itself, the materialistic conception of history. We want all our efforts to work together toward the construction of a society in which all persons will find their place, and in which they will enjoy political, economic, cultural, and religious equality and liberty.»²¹

Within the document and in later educational practices the Jesuits addressed a usual criticism towards their academic institutions, particularly schools and universities: that Jesuit schools educated the children of the rich and that their universities reiterated that social paradigm. The document argued that all Jesuit institutions should foster the social gospel and that all students should be involved in practical activities in which they would experience different social realities.²² The Jesuit Provincials called for a formation of consciences among those they taught and to use the media to foster those aims. However, the final call was aimed at all Jesuit superiors to implement those changes as soon as possible, even when some of those changes would take some time. Moreover, there was also a call for a personal conversion with deep questions to each individual Jesuit working in Latin America outlined in the following paragraph of the Jesuit document:

«Are we capable of responding to the world's expectations? Are our faith and charity equal to the anxiety-ridden appeals of the world around us? Do we practice self-denial sufficiently, so that God is able to flood us with light and energy? Does personal prayer have its proper place in our life, so that we are united with God in this great human task that cannot succeed without God? Can the Society keep within its ranks those members who do not want to pray or who do not have a real and personal prayer in life?»²³

The response to the tenants of Medellin by the Jesuit communities in Latin America was swift and sometimes unsettling for parents and teachers of those students involved. Parents were told about the revised Jesuit aims within their schools and parents were asked to adhere to them despite conservative parents' apprehensions towards the formation of their children outside the academic classroom. Despite the large number of Jesuits that left the Society of Jesus after

²⁰ Provincials of the Society of Jesus, *The Jesuits in Latin America*, May 1968, in: Hennelly (ed.), *Liberation Theology* (see footnote 9), 77–83.

²¹ Provincials of the Society of Jesus, *The Jesuits in Latin America* (see footnote 20), § 3.

²² Provincials of the Society of Jesus, *The Jesuits in Latin America* (see footnote 20), § 7.

²³ Provincials of the Society of Jesus, *The Jesuits in Latin America* (see footnote 20), § 10.

Vatican II Jesuit secondary schools maintained their academic excellence with the addition of summer work or activities of a social nature for pupils in their last years of secondary school. Within universities it was easier to comply with practical activities of a social nature as most university students were affected by a political climate of change, political awareness and political questioning. Thus, the Jesuits not only affected the developments of theologies, pastoral or otherwise, but also became involved in many activities related to the defence of indigenous minorities, political refugees and migrants.

In the case of El Salvador, where over the years the prominent theologian Jon Sobrino SJ worked, the Jesuits decided to build and implement a university that was to be a reflection of the open spirit of Vatican II and at the same time became a model institution for a deep commitment to the poor and the marginalized. The challenges of Medellín assured the Jesuit community in El Salvador that Medellín was not only a *kairos* but also a movement that could not be stopped easily. A short outline of the influential educational Jesuit enterprise arising out of Medellín is in order here, particularly the contribution of the Jesuit University of Central America (UCA). For it is a fact that the educational reform and tertiary education led by the Jesuits in El Salvador was the cause of the assassination of several Jesuits by the Salvadorian Army and the death squads paid by Salvadorian landowners. The new reformation had a strong stance among Jesuits and the Jesuits, together with Monsignor Oscar Romero, shaped the application of such reformation within Central America in general and El Salvador in particular.

The UCA campus started to be built in 1970 through financial loans from the Inter-American Development Bank (Banco Interamericano del Desarrollo – BID). The UCA under Román Mayorga Quirós as rector moved quickly into a progressive line following changes within the Jesuits and by 1976 professor Ignacio Ellacuría SJ attracted the animosity of El Salvador's President Arturo Armando Molina after he wrote an editorial in the university's magazine criticizing the halting of the Salvadorian agrarian reform. The government withdrew educational subsidies to the UCA and the attacks on the Jesuits started with the assassination of the Jesuit Rutilio Grande in March 1977. From that moment the UCA supported all pastoral plans by Archbishop Romero through its department of theology, headed by Jon Sobrino. In 1979, Ellacuría became Rector of the UCA and moved the university into research programs related to the national realities of El Salvador while immersing students, staff and the university community into the social realities of the poor of El Salvador. As the Salvadorean Civil War continued Ellacuría became very prominent within the mediation of peace accords and he spoke strongly against injustice and human rights abuses through the television, the UCA radio and the UCA publications.

Ignacio Ellacuría SJ, at the time of his assassination rector of the university, articulated this particular ministry in the following words:

«the university should be present intellectually where it is needed: to provide science for those who have no science; to provide skills for the unskilled; to be a voice for those who have no voice; to give intellectual support for those who do not possess the academic qualifications to promote and legitimate their rights».²⁴

Jon Sobrino SJ was less romantic about the possibilities of a university due to past experiences whereby Jesuit universities became top educational institutions but in doing so they compromised their possibilities of challenging unjust and sinful structures within society.

Sobrino advocated the option for the poor within a Christian university by arguing that it was unrealistic to suggest that a university should be located among the poor but that all activities and the central activities of a Christian university should look towards the poor. For him, one of the central activities within this kind of university was the dialogue between faith and science and therefore the importance of the teaching and research of theology as a discipline and as a reflection on the life of the poor and the marginalised from a Christian perspective. Sobrino's statement about theology within a university became central to understanding the challenges that the Jesuit posed to the powerful in El Salvador and the inspiration they provided to many of the communities linked to their extramural courses and training of leaders of Christian communities within El Salvador. Sobrino argued very strongly that

«theology must be turned, then, towards the people of God; it should be inserted effectively among them, draw its agenda from them and accompany them. In this sense, university theology should be a moment of theo-praxis for the whole people of God and should be considered as a theo-culture, a Christo-culture, an ecclesio-culture – that is, an instrument that cultivates and nurtures faith, hope, and love of God's people».²⁵

Conclusions

The impact of the 1968 Conference of Bishops on Latin America cannot be underestimated. The conclusions of the conference followed a deep reflection on the role and existence of the Catholic Church in Latin America and triggered change within the church and also within the spheres of ecclesial influence in Latin America.

The Jesuit response to Medellin was crucial because the Jesuits were in charge of the best schools and best universities of Latin America; as a result, they had a timely influence on the Latin American intellectuals and professionals. The Jesuit response to the Medellin document was a communitarian act of love in

²⁴ Ignacio Ellacuría SJ, *The Task of a Christian University*, in: *ibid.*/Ignacio Ellacuría and Others, *Companions of Jesus*, Maryknoll 1990, 150.

²⁵ Jon Sobrino SJ, *The University's Christian Inspiration*, in: *ibid.*/Ellacuría and Others, *Companions of Jesus* (see footnote 24), 170–171.

which a theological response to liberation also entailed the possibility of questioning the Jesuit way of life at that time. Thus, the Jesuit reformed themselves as well as triggering challenges and winds of reform to the local churches in Latin America where the Jesuits played a central role in religious and political circles. Other religious congregations followed the same example and an exodus from well-to-do places of ministry took place whereby women religious in numbers left their teaching in well-to-do public schools and exited to poor shanty towns and deprived areas of Latin American cities. Missionary orders with foreign personnel also took very seriously the conclusions of Medellin and opened new parishes in locations where previously only Marxist activists and left-wing ideologists had any access.

It is a fact that the role of religious communities has been generally underplayed in the assessment of changes that took place in 1968 and after. Therefore it is particularly important to remember that religious congregations and communities with expatriate missionaries from Ireland, Spain, France and the United States expressed their own search for a closer follow-up of the Gospel within a movement from their convents and their religious houses to the periphery, to the shanty towns and to places where they were most needed.

This movement towards the periphery and the involvement of Christians within movements of liberation was to inbuilt a golden pastoral moment to Latin America by which the period of the 1970s and 1980s could be called a true *kairos* arising of 1968 and at the same time the formation of a movement for liberation that was to shape the pastoral development of the universal church. In conclusion the year 1968 provided the beginning of a new reformation in and for Latin America.

1968: A Historiography of a New Reformation in Latin America

This paper outlines some of the ecclesial and socio-political developments that triggered a new reformation of the role of the Church in Latin America during 1968. The key event was the meeting of Latin American bishops in Medellín, Colombia, that gave authority to the pastoral commitment by the Catholic Church to the poor and marginalized. This was followed by a radical response by the Jesuits who evaluated their own pastoral work in schools and universities and developed further strategies for change, simplicity of life and a commitment to the poor.

This paper argues that as in Europe protests and new political movements triggered a reinvention of religious and political institutions that was to constitute a second reform, inspired by the changes proposed by the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) and by the political impact on Latin America by the 1959 Cuban Revolution. As a result, there was a movement towards the periphery that was to prepare a golden period for the Church in Latin America.

1968: zur Geschichte einer Neuen Reformation in Lateinamerika

Dieser Beitrag beschäftigt sich mit einigen der kirchlichen und soziopolitischen Entwicklungen, welche um 1968 eine neue Reformation in der Rolle der Kirche in Lateinamerika auslösten. Das Schlüsselereignis war das Treffen der lateinamerikanischen Bischöfe in Medellín, Kolumbien, welches dem pastoralen Bekenntnis der katholischen Kirche gegenüber den Armen und Marginalisierten Autorität verlieh. Es wurde von einer radikalen Antwort von Seiten der Jesuiten gefolgt, die ihre eigene pastorale Arbeit in Schulen und Universitäten evaluierten und neue Strategien für Wandel, Einfachheit des Lebens und Engagement für die Armen entwickelten.

Der Beitrag vertritt die These, dass wie in Europa Proteste und neue politische Bewegungen eine Neuerfindung von Religion und politischen Institutionen hervorbrachte, welche eine zweite Reform begründen sollte, inspiriert durch die vom Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil (1962–1965) beabsichtigten Änderungen und durch die politischen Auswirkungen der Kubakrise von 1959 auf Lateinamerika. Als Resultat zeigte sich eine Bewegung zur Peripherie, welche eine Hochphase für die Kirche in Lateinamerika vorbereitete.

1968: l'historiographie d'une nouvelle réformation en Amérique Latine

Cet article traite de certains développements ecclésiastiques et sociopolitiques qui ont déclenché vers 1968 une nouvelle réformation du rôle de l'Eglise en Amérique Latine. La rencontre des évêques latino-américains à Medellín en Colombie fut l'évènement clé car elle affirma l'engagement pastoral de l'Eglise catholique envers les pauvres et les marginalisés. Les Jésuites répondirent de façon radicale en évaluant leur propre travail pastoral dans les écoles et les universités et en développant de nouvelles stratégies pour le changement, la simplicité de vie et l'engagement pour les pauvres.

Cet article soutient la thèse selon laquelle, tel que ce fut le cas en Europe, les protestations et les nouveaux mouvements politiques engendrèrent une réinvention des institutions religieuses et politiques qui devait amener à une deuxième réforme, inspirée par les changements prévus par le Deuxième Concile du Vatican (1962–1965) et par l'impact politique sur l'Amérique Latine de la Révolution Cubaine de 1959. Il en résulta un mouvement vers la périphérie qui allait préparer une période dorée pour l'Eglise en Amérique latine.

Schlüsselbegriffe – Mots clés – Keywords

Lateinamerika – Amérique Latine – Latin America, Katholische Kirche – Eglise catholique – Catholic Church, Medellín – Medellín – Medellín, Jesuiten – Jésuites – Jesuits, Entscheidung für die Armen – engagement envers les pauvres – option for the poor, El Salvador, Chile – Chili – Chile, Universitäten – universités – universities.

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