

THE ROLE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN COLOMBIAN SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
POST WORLD WAR II

By

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To my parents, Jorge and Helen. Thank you for you love, support and strength. To my Aunts Mary and Martha. Thank you for your love and encouragement

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The Colombian Catholic Church has been known since the colonial time period to be highly conservative and has always sided with the conservative political party. With the meeting of the Latin American Episcopal Conference (CELAM) in Medellín, liberal thinkers began to write and promote social development activity. In Colombia during 1960's there were examples of priests and organizations that spoke out against the social order, but the examples of a move to the left in the Colombian Catholic Church were few and often fought against by the hierarchy of the Catholic Church. The research question that I pose is how did Vatican II affect the Catholic Church in Colombia? And how has the Catholic Church aided in Social development since Vatican II? The hypotheses put forth are that although there have been moves by certain orders and members of the Catholic Church to progress to the left, overall the hierarchy in the country has kept the Catholic Church predominantly conservative and made social development through the Catholic Church difficult. The interact ties between Church and State in Colombia cannot be ignored when researching the religious history and progression of the nation. It helped immensely to be resident in Colombia and gain a basic understanding of not only the history but also the people and their culture.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

When I started my thesis research in the summer of 2006 I had decided to research education in Colombia. Yet, after living in Colombia for six weeks I realized that education was not my true passion. Every Sunday I attended mass at a Catholic Church with my host family and looked around the church to see who attended. While in Bogota we attended a church in a middle class neighborhood where all the parishioners came from the same financial and social background. Outside of the church a man waited every Sunday for handouts. After several weeks in Bogotá I moved to the more rural area of Duitama which is in the department (equivalent to a state) of Boyacá. Here the church was more diverse. People came from all different social backgrounds and parts of the city. Driving through either of these cities there were definite class divisions. The shanty towns that surrounded Bogotá backed up onto wealthy gated communities. While I was in Cartagena, the major tourist destination in Colombia, I also found it interesting that while visiting the monastery of La Popa, that the priests had posted signs asking that tourists not give money to the children begging. The signs stated that these children had chosen to beg instead of attend school and by giving them money we were only promoting a cycle of dependency.

In a country that is supposedly losing its faith in the Catholic Church there was still a visible devotion and even those who I visited that did not attend mass had whole walls or even rooms devoted to the Virgin Mary and Jesus. After experiencing these disparities I knew I wanted to study the role of the Catholic Church in the lives of Colombians. Colombia is a religiously conservative country. The bishops of Colombia have been known to ignore liberal encyclicals from the Vatican. Yet Vatican II and the meeting of the Latin American Episcopal Conference (CELAM) in Medellín demanded recognition of poverty. My thesis is that though

there have been moves inside the Catholic Church of Colombia to be more involved in social development¹ the church remains conservative and slow moving. This thesis further suggests that in order to help those living below the poverty line in Colombia, Catholic organizations with only tenuous ties to the hierarchy of the Catholic Church² have had to do most of the work. Ironically, as I pursued my thesis research I found that I was again studying education because these organizations were promoting education for all Colombians. The two main groups that I focus on are CINEP and El Minuto de Dios. These groups promote education in order to gain self sufficiency. This is in contrast to the Catholic hierarchy who promoted dependency on the church.

My study draws on key issues dealing with the Colombian state. The Catholic Church has long been associated with politics in Colombia and even after a respite they have returned to the role in the ongoing peace talks between the government and the guerrillas. The church has also vocally criticized the Colombian government's decision to legalize abortion. There is a lack of vocalization and action, however, on important issues such as poverty and wealth distribution. This thesis looks at the relationship not only between the Catholic Church and the government but also the Catholic Church and the citizens of Colombia. Research has been done on the ongoing civil conflict in Colombia, on politics and on the ever growing Protestant population. Those who remain Catholic and follow the ideals of Vatican II, however, have rarely been the

¹ Social development, according to the Catholic Church, concerns the whole man. It is concerned with increasing each person's ability to respond to his vocation and hence to God's call. Second, the common good requires the *social well-being* and *development* of the group itself. Development is the epitome of all social duties. Certainly, it is the proper function of authority to arbitrate, in the name of the common good, between various particular interests; but it should make accessible to each what is needed to lead a truly human life: food, clothing, health, work, education and culture, suitable information, the right to establish a family, and so on. (Catholic Catechist, paragraphs 2461 and 1908)

² For this thesis the terms 'the hierarchy of the Catholic Church' and 'Catholic hierarchy' will be defined as the upper echelon leaders of the Catholic Church. Those included in the Catholic hierarchy are the Pope, Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops (Van Hove 1910).

focus of research. Colombia has a high poverty rate and I wanted to see if the Catholic Church was working to alleviate that in anyway. Since Catholicism plays such an important cultural role in Colombia it would seem that the church would want to give something back to the people. Or at least protect their role in society when other religions are beginning to enter the country. Yet they have left most of the work up to other organizations. I am not trying to portray the Catholic Church in a bad light in this thesis. I am, however, trying to raise awareness. Poverty is an epidemic and a more large scale initiative needs to take place through the church.

Research Question

In 1962, Pope John XXIII called the bishops of the Catholic Church to Rome in order to discuss the progress and place of the Catholic Church in the modern world. Out of the numerous documents that emerged from Vatican II, the most important for Latin America was *Gaudium et Spes*. *Gaudium et Spes* was the first explicit ecclesiastical acknowledgement that a majority of practitioners of Catholicism lived in poverty. After the close of Vatican II the cardinals, bishops, and priests in Latin America met in Medellin, Colombia to discuss the fruits of Vatican II.

Since CELAM is headquartered in Colombia, and because the progressive meeting of bishops was also held in Colombia one would expect that progressive Catholicism should have had a major impact on the country. It did not. It is the thesis of this paper that though there have been moves inside the Catholic Church of Colombia to be more involved in social development in Colombia, the church there remains conservative and slow moving. The thesis further suggests that in order to help the vast majority of people living below the poverty line in Colombia, Catholic organizations with only tenuous ties to the hierarchy of the Catholic Church have had to step in to do the work. The Catholic hierarchy prefers to emphasize perceived spiritual concerns over socio-political maladies.

Colombia has suffered turmoil because of political violence that began in the 1940's. The Catholic Church has been involved in the political wars and their image in the country has been sullied because of their relationship with the Conservative party. At the end of the 1950's the Catholic Church tried to remove itself from the politics of Colombia. Vatican II asked the Catholic Churches around the world to take a more active role in practitioners' quotidian lives. The church in Colombia was reticent to take such decisive action given the rampant violence and political corruption. How did Vatican II affect the Catholic Church in Colombia as it was trying to remove itself from the social world of Colombia? Has the Catholic Church remained predominately conservative in Colombia? What social reforms have occurred through the Catholic Church? How have independent Catholic groups been able to aid the people? Does the hierarchy of the Catholic Church help or hinder the social efforts of the laity in Colombia? I examine the programs in place to help the majority of Catholics who live below the poverty line in Colombia. Has the assistance given to victims improved since Vatican II? It is also important to address the relationship between the Vatican and the Colombian Catholic Church. All these questions are discussed to support the thesis that Catholic organizations and not the hierarchy of the Catholic Church in Colombia are the ones who helped move the social development, especially for the people living below the poverty level.

Objectives

Little research has been done on the Catholic Church in Colombia. Prominent Catholic figures such as Camilo Torres are rarely discussed and the importance of development through the Church is not researched. Other regions, such as Brazil, (where Progressive Catholicism has had a major influence) have been more thoroughly researched and have a more extensive body of literature. With the headquarters of CELAM being located in Colombia and the population still being predominately Catholic it is important to see if Catholic social teaching is taking place. A

majority of the Colombian population lives in poverty and also professes to be Catholic. My objective is to see how the Catholic Church helps or hinders social development in Colombia. Currently, groups such as CINEP work on development projects throughout Colombia.

I plan to divide my work into three sections. The first will be the history of Colombia and the Catholic Church. The chapter will investigate the links between politics and religion and how they affect the social order of Colombia. It will also discuss how the church reacted during certain key periods in Colombia's history such as La Violencia, the National Front and the dictatorship of Rojas Pinilla. Chapter Three will investigate the Catholic Church in Colombia and how she has progressed since Vatican II. The formation of new social organizations through the Catholic Church will be discussed as well as the impact of the Colombian Catholic hierarchy on the Conference of bishops in Medellin, Colombia and Puebla, Mexico. The first part of the chapter will address the important documents of Vatican II, the Medellin conference and Puebla. The second half of the chapter will discuss how these documents were followed or how they disregarded the documents. Finally, the fourth chapter will focus on programs that were started by Catholic priests and nuns yet have faced problems with the hierarchy of the church.

First, the strengths and weaknesses of groups such as SAL and Gloconda will be discussed. Modern Catholic organizations such as CINEP and *Solidaridad* will also be discussed including their successes and failures with the hierarchy of the Catholic Church. The chapter will discuss their roles in Colombia and their relationship with the Catholic hierarchy. The chapter will also examine groups such as Minuto de Dios who are supported by the hierarchy for their conservative nature. The relationship of the Charismatic Catholic movement with the Vatican will also be discussed. It is my goal to discuss the major players in Catholic social development and how they hinder or promote helping the majority of Colombians living in poverty.

Literature Review

The literature on Catholicism in Latin America is vast and deals with all the roles the Catholic Church has played. In each country in Latin America Catholicism has been a major player in the political world and after Vatican II a more predominant player in the social lives of Catholics whether wealthy or poor. This literature review will focus on Catholicism in Latin America, the role the Catholic Church plays in politics and key documents from the hierarchy of the Catholic Church. More specifically, the literature review will focus on Catholicism in Colombia. Latin America's history is tied to the Catholic Church.

Catholicism in Latin America has taken on many shapes and forms. In the early colonial period Catholic priests were sent to Latin America to keep checks on the Spanish conquistadors. The royalty in Spain wanted to make sure that the interests of the crown were pursued instead of the conquistadors' personal interests. According to Michael Kearney in his article, "Religion, Ideology, and Revolution in Latin America", the Catholic Church in Latin America held close ties to the Spanish crown until independence and was not trusted by many of the criollos who considered the priests spies (Kearney 1986, 5). When independence was won, the Catholic Church had to regain the trust of the ruling hacienda owners in Latin America. The Catholic Church aligned themselves with the elite in order to maintain their power in the new world. The Catholic hierarchy in Latin America tended to come from wealthy families and therefore aligned themselves with the rich (Williams 1973, 263).

The Catholic Church in Latin America has maintained its ties to the political and landed elites in Latin America in order to guarantee its place in society. By promoting the status quo in politics and society they also guaranteed that they would have a secure position. The Catholic Church's hierarchy was selected from wealthy families (Lipset and Solari 1967, 194). This tie to the elite in Latin America faced several obstacles when encyclicals such as Pope John XXIII's

encyclical *Mater et Magistra* recalled the teachings in Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum*. These encyclicals focused on social matters and called the attention of the bishops to the plight of the poor. When John XXIII assumed the position of pope he set in motion a social agenda that promoted change inside the Catholic Church. His legacy includes calling the Second Vatican Council.

In 1962, the Second Vatican Council was opened by Pope John XXIII. One of the most important documents to come out of this meeting of the leaders of the Catholic Church came out in the Council's final year. The document was called *Gaudium et Spes* and it promotes social justice issues. According to *Gaudium et Spes*:

God intended the earth with everything contained in it for the use of all human beings and peoples. Since there are so many people prostrate with hunger in the world, this sacred council urges all, both individuals and governments, to remember the aphorism of the Fathers, "Feed the man dying of hunger, because if you have not fed him, you have killed him," and really to share and employ their earthly goods, according to the ability of each, especially by supporting individuals or peoples with the aid by which they may be able to help and develop themselves. (Pope Paul VI 1965, 45)

The Catholic Church recognized that a majority of her practitioners lived in poverty and that they needed to be recognized. *Gaudium et Spes* is worded in a more aggressive tone than the documents of John XXIII. It calls for the governments and the people of the world to recognize and act on the wealth disparity. It states that those who do not acknowledge the poverty are accountable for the deaths of those who are starving. As a result, the Vatican promoted the organization of the Latin American Episcopal Conference (CELAM). In 1968 CELAM met in Medellin, Colombia to discuss how the fruits of Vatican II would work within Latin America (Williams 1973, 269).

Pope Paul VI opened the meeting of CELAM in Medellin in August of 1968. The previous year Paul VI issued an encyclical entitled *Populorum Progressio*. The encyclical was the most liberal of Paul VI's encyclicals and revolved around the same ideals of *Gaudium et Spes*. The

pope states in his encyclical that, “The progressive development of the peoples is an object of deep interest and concern to the Church” (*Populorum Progressio* 1967, 1). The encyclical goes on to say that is the duty of the Catholic Church to help those who are suffering for inequality and those who should be educated on how to help alleviate the problem. The documents of Medellin would follow along similar lines stating,

The Latin American church encourages the formation of national communities that reflect a global organization, where all of the peoples, but more especially the lower classes have, by means of territorial and functional structures, an active and receptive, creative and decisive participation in the construction of a new society. Those intermediary structures--between the person and the state--should be freely organized, without any unwarranted interference from authority or from dominant groups, in view of their development and concrete participation in the accomplishment of the total common good. They constitute the vital network of society. They are also the true expression of the citizens' liberty and unity (CELAM 1968 document on peace).

These statements promote the bishops, priests and nuns to be active in their community. It also promotes a relationship between all classes and a unification of those in poverty. Medellin helped to lay the foundation for base communities. The development of base communities allowed people living in poverty to organize and take control of their communities (Cleary 1990, 50).

After the conference in Medellin, the bishops began to work with governments and communities around Latin America, Central America and Mexico in order to understand and connect with the people. Soup kitchens and development projects were started in both rural and urban areas and social development was promoted by the clergy (Williams 1973, 269). Because of the Catholic Church's renewed interest in the people, bishops began to write “Pastoral Letters” on national development (Williams 1973, 270). The Catholic clergy has taken action by developing labor unions, developing literacy campaigns, peasant leagues and becoming guerrilla fighters. Some priests joined revolutionary movements and others were martyred because of their vocal opposition to repressive regimes (Williams 1973, 271). One of the Church's most famous

martyrs is Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador. Archbishop Romero was a promoter of social development programs for the poor and an opponent of the “elitist” government. In 1980, Archbishop Romero was shot and killed while celebrating Sunday Mass.

The Catholic Church is divided in Latin America. While the CELAM in Medellin promoted the movement of Liberation Theology, Pope Paul VI and his successors have worked to stop what they considered the radical movement to the left of the clergy. Many of the Church hierarchy still have ties to the wealthy minority in Latin America. Others, such as many Jesuits, have chosen to break these same ties and move out into rural areas to promote social development. Though many Catholics have made a move to the left in their political attitude, this friction inside the Catholic clergy has led to a more moderate Catholic political attitude.

Brazil, like most South American countries had ties to the Catholic Church that dated back to the colonization of the country. Brazilian bishops, however, were much more willing to take action after Vatican II and after the meeting of CELAM in Medellin. In Brazil, the Catholic Church became more progressive. The meetings of Medellin occurred during a time of oppression in Brazil. There was a military coup in 1964 and the church was the only organization capable of speaking out against repression without serious consequences (Mainwaring 1984, 97-98). The Catholic Church in Brazil made an effort to include the popular classes after the meetings in Medellin. They helped to form base communities that allowed the members to have control and they help to create community among those living in poverty (Mainwaring 1984, 100). The Catholic Church in Brazil was much more active than they were in other locations, such as Colombia. This has to do with the bishops and their dioceses. Bishops have control over their diocese and can choose to participate or not in initiatives set forth by the country’s conference of bishops. From the 1960’s, Brazil has had many progressive bishops who were able

to contribute to the work done with those living in poverty. Colombia, however, is not known for its progressive bishops, though there have been a few.

Other countries in South America also felt the liberal effects of Medellín. In Paraguay bishops such as Bishop Ramón Bogarín, promoted the “preferential option for the poor” by defending those who lived in poverty. Bishop Bogarín was a vocal opponent of the Stroessner regime and chose, though from an aristocratic family, to live in a small simplistic apartment. When Bogarín died five thousand peasants broke police barricades in order to attend his funeral (Cleary 1990, 47). The Pinochet government in Chile also felt the effects of a vocal church hierarchy. Though this led to the persecution of priests and bishops, religious orders were still resolved to “be the voice of the voiceless, the poor and oppressed”(Cleary 1990, 49).

In Colombia bishops tend to come from the same departments, seminaries and financial backgrounds. The missionary priests who first arrived in what is now Colombia had as their main interest the conversion of the indigenous people of South America and also the acquisition of new wealth for the Spanish throne. As time progressed these missionaries were forced to choose between working in the colonies that wanted their freedom and loyalty to the Spanish throne. Once Colombia had its independence from Spain priests were dispersed throughout the country and seminaries were opened. A majority of priests in Colombia are native born and stay in their respective departments. This allows a familial bond between priests and parishes. The hierarchy of the Catholic Church in Colombia is also homogeneous. They come from the same seminaries and the same departments. Antioquia was the birthplace of most bishops in Colombia during the 1970s. Departments that were considered conservative also had a majority representation in the hierarchy of the Catholic Church (Schwan and Ugalde 1974, 478-479). Bishops are groomed for their position from high school in Colombia. The future bishops are “not only educated but also

guided along a path of election"(Schwan and Ugalde 1974, 481). The bishops are usually elected to their position at a young age, usually 45, almost guaranteeing that they will hold the position for a significant amount of time (Schwan and Ugalde 1974, 481). This move ensures the hierarchy has trained its successors to follow the same rhetorical path as their predecessors. Colombian bishops, for the most part, have refused to enter the world of the poor. They live in middle- and upper-class homes and have little contact to the majority in poverty (Cleary 1990, 52).

According to Lars Schoultz, the history of the Colombian Catholic Church can be divided into seven periods. In his article "Reform and Reaction in the Colombian Catholic Church," Schoultz describes the relationship between the Catholic Church and the government of Colombia. The first period, which spanned from 1509 to 1849, was marked by a dominant Catholic Church which had extreme control in politics. For example, the Archbishop of Bogotá was the head of the provisional government when the president elect was in Europe. According to Schoultz, the development of the conservative party in Colombia was the joining of several political parties formed by the Catholic Church (Schoultz 1973, 230).

The Catholic Church has not always had clear domination in Colombia. During several periods of liberal governmental rule, religious orders, such as the Jesuits, were expelled from the country. In 1849 a liberal president expelled the Jesuits and took away power from the Catholic Church which resulted in mandatory civil unions and the secularization of schools and cemeteries. These acts were always repealed with the instatement of new presidents and then usually more power was given to the Catholic Church (Schoultz 1973, 232). With each succeeding Conservative president the Catholic Church gained support and power. Under liberal

presidents the power was revoked. Because of the conservative nature of the Catholic Church and support from the Conservative party, the church was against liberal leadership.

During the 1940s the role of the Catholic Church in politics became clear. La Violencia, Colombia's major civil war began with the death of Jorge Eleicer Gaitán. Though a political divide in Colombia has always been hard to cross, the death of Gaitán sparked massive rioting and the violence quickly spread throughout the country (Palacios 2006, 141). The Catholic Church sided with the conservative party and promoted violence towards liberals during this period. Priests used their homilies to condone the violence of the conservatives and speak out against the liberals (Bailey 1967, 565). The active participation of the Catholic Church in La Violencia had a negative affect on the church and its legitimacy.

During the National Front period (1958-1974) the Liberal party agreed to support the Catholic Church's power in the country in order to form a mutual peace between the two parties. The Catholic Church agreed to the National Front because it guaranteed their legitimacy in Colombia. During the National Front the Catholic Church removed itself from politics in Colombia and resolved itself to focus on the spirituality of the people (Dix 1980, 315). During the National Front the Catholic Church launched small scale initiatives in the development of base communities. They tried in the rural and urban areas to promote community with the Catholic Church at the center. These communities, however, gave little power to the people and so they were not able to take ownership of the projects. Priests remained at the head of the projects (Levine 1990, 739).

From the 1960s the Catholic Church in Colombia has had to decide how significant a role they would play in the quotidian lives of the Colombian people. The literature on social development and Catholicism in Colombia is mainly conducted by Daniel Levine. Levine is a

leading scholar on Catholicism in Colombia and has conducted extensive field research in the country. Levine examines in his extensive body of work the successes and failures of the Catholic Church and other Catholic organizations that have taken a leading role in social development. He has worked in rural and urban dioceses as well as investigated outside Catholic organizations. *Popular Voices in Latin American Catholicism* focuses on Catholicism in Venezuela and Colombia. In the book Levine discusses the role of the Catholic Church's hierarchy, how they have helped or hindered development in Colombia. Levine also examines the importance of priests in the everyday lives of Catholics in Colombia. He notes the successes of priests who belong to orders instead of the dioceses.

Priests are able to conduct their work not only through the Catholic Church but through their own initiatives. Organizations with only tenuous ties to the Catholic Church have been started to fill in the void that the church has left in development. These organizations have the Catholic Church at their base but promote self sufficiency and community growth. Sadly the news from Colombia does not report these projects. Colombia has been at the center of world news because of the persistent violence and drug trade. These two factors have kept social development in the country at a minimum. By gaining access to the literature of both the Catholic Church and her role in development I was able to see the possibility for growth inside the society. Currently the Colombian population has religious freedom, but a majority of the citizens still consider themselves Catholic. Protestantism is growing in Colombia along with the idea of considering oneself "culturally" Catholic. The current president of the country, Álvaro Uribe, is also a Catholic, but the Church maintains that it has no ties to politics.

Significance

The Catholic Church has always been a dominate part of people's lives in Colombia. The Church has also been very vocal on the need for peace and social development inside countries

such as Colombia. What measures need to be taken for this to occur? Is the Catholic Church progressing in Colombia in order to accommodate all practitioners or is it following the conservative status quo? By conducting research on this topic we can see the involvement of the Catholic Church in every aspect of Colombian citizens' lives. Through this research we can analyze the importance of the Catholic Church in people's lives. We will investigate certain documents and historical events that have affected the church. We can also see the effects of Vatican II and Liberation Theology in a country that is notorious for being loyal to conservative principles. The Catholic Church is not only affected by the Vatican, but also her location. There are special circumstances that have caused the church to act as she has in Colombia. In order for development to occur the social structure of Colombia must be changed. If the priests and hierarchy of the Catholic Church still have ties to the elite it will be hard to have any effective change from the top down. The significance of this work is to see if social change is occurring throughout the Catholic Church or if there is any possibility for change.

CHAPTER 2
THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND POST WORLD WAR II POLITICS

The End of World War II and the Build up to Vatican II

Violence has plagued Colombia ever since its independence from Spain. Small periods of peace have ensued, but since the 1940s the country has faced a consistent fight between the government and the home grown guerrillas. The Catholic Church and the Colombian government have had close ties from the inception of the nation. The violence that has played out through the history of the country has inadvertently involved the church and hurt her image. Rural priests and nuns were put to the test during the height of violence and forced to take sides. Finally, the church hierarchy was forced to break ties with the government because of the lack of trust it caused. When the church realized the damage siding with the Conservative party was causing to their image they looked for ways to remove themselves from the secular world. The ties between the Catholic Church and Colombian government originally stemmed from family connections within the upper class (who rule the country) and a concordat between the government and the Vatican. In the following pages the history of the country and the role the Catholic Church played will be discussed.

The 1886 Constitution made a secure place for the Catholic Church in Colombia. The political Conservatives in Colombia guaranteed the Catholic Church its security by signing a concordat³ with the Vatican. The concordat guaranteed protection to the Catholic Church and promised she would not be expelled from Colombia. The church received more freedom to function than any other religious organization. While the Liberal party was anti-Church, the

³ The definition of a Concordat is an agreement between the Vatican and a government (in this case Colombia) on religious matters. This often included both recognition and privileges for the Catholic Church in a particular country. Privileges may include influence on the structure and direction of state education, exemptions from certain legal matters and processes, and issues such as taxation and government funding directed to the Church, as well as the ability of a state to influence the selection of bishops within the country.

Conservative party was not and has dominated much of Colombian politics. The Catholic ties to the Conservative party have been historically strong though post Vatican II they have waned.

In the 1930s Colombia was one of the few countries that did not experience any severe loss from the Great Depression because its coffee market continued to boom. The coffee market allowed Colombia to experience moderate economic success. After World War II however, Colombia experienced a re-emergence of the civil unrest that had plagued the country in the 1880s. Historically Colombia has been divided into two political parties, the Liberals and the Conservatives. This has been true since it became an independent republic. The Liberals have been anticlerical from their inception and the Conservatives were formed from former Catholic political parties.

Vatican II and the CELAM meetings in Medellin, Colombia (1968) also have affected the Catholic Church in Colombia. These meetings set forth rules and ideas that the clergy were supposed to follow. In Latin America the most important aspect of these meetings dealt with the treatment of the poor in developing countries. The relationship of the Colombian Catholic Church to the citizens who are not in the upper class is weak. Though a mass majority of the population is Catholic they distrust the organization because of her former political ties. CELAM and Vatican II promoted a movement of missionaries into the countryside to help the people. The Catholic Church did form new churches in Colombia during the National Front period, but the social activism that was promoted by CELAM was not seen by the people.

To understand the Catholic Church in Colombia today one must understand its connection to the politics of the country. "Politics is seen in terms of the structures of power, which favor some interests at the expense of others. In this sense, politics pervades all social relations, since all are permeated with power" (Levine and Wilde 1977, 225). Relationships

between Catholic development movements and the Church hierarchy are strained at best. In a country where chaos leads to distrust of the government and at times the Catholic Church, it is hard for social development to occur. The Colombian class structure has also had a negative effect on the relationship between the people and the Catholic Church. Because the Catholic leaders choose to avoid dialogue concerning class structure, they have a problem deciding which programs are most suited to development in Colombia. Further consternation is caused by the connection to the hierarchy in Rome.

La Violencia

The tumultuous recent history of Colombia has its beginning in the 1930's. The Liberal and Conservative parties have fought over control of the Colombian government from the time of independence from Spain. At times the two parties would share the government and there would be a period of tense peace. Politics is a blood game in Colombia and in the mid-1930s the Liberal party won what could be considered an open election (Bailey 1967, 565). The Liberal party, however, could not stay organized and by the 1940s control of the government was available to either party. The radical part of the Liberal party was lead by Jorge Eliecer Gaitán, who was known for going into rural areas in order to gather the support of the populace.

Jorge Eliecer Gaitán set in motion a change of events that would promote the voting of the populace. Before Gaitán began to travel around Colombia, voting was at an all time low. Gaitan, however, was charismatic and promoted socialist ideals. He understood that a majority of the people in rural areas were mainly concerned with government initiatives that would affect them specifically. Though Gaitán first ran under his own newly formed party he soon learned he would not be elected unless he was part of the Liberal party.

In 1948, Gaitán was assassinated though it is still unclear who did it. Gaitán knew however that an assassination attempt was possible and on several occasions he told his

followers, “If they kill me, avenge me” (Palacios 2006, 141). The populace followed his directions. After the assassination the capital of Bogotá burned for a week. Gaitán’s death set off mass demonstrations and La Violencia began again. Gaitán was the first political figure who was able to organize the mass populace in Colombia. As a politician Gaitán was able to capitalize on his working class background in order to make a connection with those living below the poverty line in Colombia. His popularity with the people scared both Liberals and Conservatives. His political ideas were too progressive for either political party and for that reason he was assassinated by other politicians.

The new round of La Violencia began with demonstrations lead by Gaitán’s supporters. The violence spread to rural departments (the Colombian equivalent to states in the U.S.A.) that surrounded the capital. There are no clear records of how many people were killed during this period, but according to the data hundreds of thousands were murdered (Bailey 1967, 564). During the 1940s period of La Violencia, guerrilla groups were formed which tried to take control by attacking small communities. The military and the police were sent to control the situation, but only made it worse because it was a mass attack on anyone who they might consider subversive.

The Catholic Church in Colombia also has ties to the events that took place during this period. In a country that is predominantly Catholic, ties between politics and religion are unavoidable. The Catholic Church was known to side with the Conservatives and in small outlying communities they would condemn the Liberals. The Catholic Church whose official stance is to stay out of politics was vocal in their support for the Conservative party during this period. The Conservatives used this tie to their advantage because they knew that the peasants in the countryside would follow the instructions of the Catholic Church (Bailey 1967, 572). Though

the bishop's conference of Colombia had long condemned the participation of clergy in politics it was still known that bishops and priests participated in Conservative conferences.

The extreme cases of violence that occurred during La Violencia were not completely secularized. The Catholic Church's hierarchy urged priests to vocalize their conservative views during the celebration of the daily mass (Levine 1977, 229). During La Violencia it was difficult to travel through Colombia safely. Violence was rampant in the country and there was little protection for any person, however, priests in rural regions would guarantee safe passage to Conservatives. They vocalized their dislike for the Liberal party and condoned violence against them. The hierarchy of the Catholic Church condemned the Liberal party as "atheists and communists" (Levine 1977, 229). The intense scrutiny of the Liberal party by the Catholic hierarchy made the rift between Liberals and Catholic priests grow. The Liberals refused any sort of association with the Catholic Church and when in power they were critical of the church and her teachings (Levine 1977, 229).

During this period members of the bishop's conference began to see the problems that were caused by condoning violence. The Catholic Church's role in politics had only increased the violence. The church's role also created distrust towards the church. In order to regain trust the leadership felt it was necessary to retreat into the church and focus on their spiritual role. The Archbishop of Bogotá during the 1940's was Monsignor Ismael Perdomo. He promoted unity inside politics and "forbade clerical support of one party over another or even mention of a party in sermons" (Levine 1977, 230). During the National Front the new archbishop of Bogotá, Monsignor Luis Concha Cordoba would carry out the same ideals of the removal of the Catholic Church from politics. The Catholic Church saw La Violencia as a hereditary hatred and did not feel blame for the violence could be put on one party or another. Bishops, such as Monsignor

Ismael Perdomo, saw that if the Catholic Church supported the Conservative party they were running the risk of dividing the practitioners. In the end the hierarchy realized that the Catholic Church was more important than participating in political games. The Catholic Church believed that with the National Front was a peaceful agreement that would allow the two parties to coexist without violence. The peace agreement protected not only the people, but allowed the Church to pull itself out from politics a little (Levine 1977, 231).

Dictatorship, Violence and Social Construction

In 1953, a military coup occurred in Colombia under General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla. The new dictator had the support of part of the Conservative party. Initially the new leadership was met with the hope of stability and order in a country that had become violent and chaotic. Between the years of 1953 and 1956, Pinilla began to implement his plans for social reforms. He planned on using excess revenue from coffee sales for these projects; however those plans were quickly rejected (Bailey 1967, 565). Projects that began during the Pinilla era included public education, health programs, low income housing and the giving of land titles to those who had been most adversely affected by La Violencia (Palacios 2006, 133). Pinilla also began programs that allowed the guerrilla fighters to rejoin society without punishment. His main goal was to reinstate a civil society in Colombia which had been torn apart by the civil war.

The government of Rojas Pinilla had close ties to industrialists inside of Colombia and the Peron government in Argentina. The political tie to Juan Peron would prove to be a bad connection because the Peron regime was nearing its end and had accumulated many enemies, including the Catholic Church and the U.S. government. Neither the Catholic Church nor the U.S. government wanted more dictatorships in Latin America. The Catholic Church feared a loss of power to the new regime run by Pinilla. The U.S. government also feared a loss of control in the region and did not like the idea of their financial interests being at risk (Palacios 2006, 133).

La Violencia did not weaken during the Rojas Pinilla regime; it just took on new forms. During the Rojas Pinilla years the department of Tolima suffered the most from La Violencia. There was tension between immigrants from other departments who came looking for work and to escape the violence in their departments and the natives of Tolima. There was also unrest due to ethnic conflict in the southern portion of the region. And finally, there was still hostility between landowners and the landless peasants who were often on different sides of the political spectrum. According to Palacios the lack of elections during the Rojas Pinilla years lead to local business owners taking over their own direction and allowed them to rule over their own cities (Palacios 2006, 160).

The violence included police, the army, paramilitaries and guerrillas. Each of the guerilla organizations was defending something different. The Rovira guerillas were defending their right to be Protestant in Tolima while Juan de la Cruz Varela and Jacobo Prias defended their right to be communist in Cundinamarca and southern Tolima respectively (Palacios 2006, 161). Because the mass majority had no voice in government, violence broke out and dominated society. However, the violence was still dominated by the wealthy and the poor suffered the consequences of warring ideologies (Palacios 2006, 162). In mid-1951 the Liberals and Conservatives began to design a plan to disarm the guerrillas and develop a peaceful end to La Violencia (Palacios 2006, 162).

The true fall of Pinilla, however, came with the collapse of coffee prices on the world market. When Colombia entered an economic crisis the opponents of Pinilla in both the Conservative and Liberal parties blamed him for the coffee crash. The two main parties did not like Pinilla's idea that the two party system in Colombia was inadequate. The two parties became more vocal in their disputes with Pinilla by the time of the crisis. The World Bank and

International Monetary Fund suggested economic reforms for Colombia which Pinilla rejected saying it would only hurt the poor. By 1957, however, the Liberals and Conservatives had won and Pinilla was out of the government. It was the end of his social reforms.

The Catholic Church was uncomfortable supporting the dictatorship of Pinilla. The Conservative party had pushed for his rise to power and because of the relationship between the party and the church they did not vocally oppose any issues with the new dictator. Pinilla however, wanted sincere support because he felt it helped to legitimize his rule (Hartlyn 1984, 249). There were mixed opinions about Rojas Pinilla inside the church hierarchy. Some supported the previous president Laureano Gómez Castro, who was both part of the Conservative party and a staunch Catholic. Gómez was president of Colombia from 1950 to 1953 when Rojas Pinilla took power. "Throughout Colombia, Gómez was known until his death in 1965 to be 'more Catholic than the Pope'"(Schoultz 1973, 235). During the Gómez regime, however, the violence of La Violencia grew and Protestants were specifically targeted. If the Church wanted to promote peace they could not back Gómez's regime (Schoultz 1973, 235).

When the Catholic hierarchy and the Conservative party refused to back the Gómez regime he was forced into exile. While in exile Gómez stated that the Catholic hierarchy, "had deserted him in his hour of greatest need" and without their support Gómez was not able to regain power or legitimacy in Colombia (Schoultz 1973, 236).

The Conservative party never saw Pinilla's rule as a long standing plan to fix the problems with La Violencia. As soon as Pinilla took office, however, it was clear that he planned to be there for as long as possible. Pinilla courted the Catholic Church's support in order for legitimacy. "At the end of his first full year as President the Church felt that it had in Rojas 'a man convinced that the principles of the Gospel are the ones which must give life to our

society’”(Schoultz 1973, 236). The relationship between Pinilla and the Catholic Church was not strong however, and waned throughout his dictatorship. The lack of confidence from the church did not cause Pinilla’s downfall, but it did contribute to the end of his regime (Schoultz 1973, 236). Because the Liberals also disliked the dictatorship of Pinilla both parties began to look for ways to remove him from power. The hierarchy of the church had one goal in mind during this period and that was to keep power and legitimacy. As goals were drafted by the opposing parties the role of the church was always made secure (Hartlyn 1984, 254). In the end the Liberals were willing to support the centrality of the Catholic Church and in turn the church was willing to support the National Front.

Uncomfortable Peace

Following the end of La Violencia and the Rojas Pinilla dictatorship the Liberal and Conservative parties developed an agreement called the National Front. The agreement stated that the two political parties would share power equally, exchanging the presidency with each term. The congress would also be divided equally between the Liberals and the Conservatives. This coalition between the two parties lasted until 1974. The formation of the National Front guaranteed that there would be no challenges to the two party system in Colombia and that the politicians had both job security and financial security for themselves and their supporters (Martz 1992, 93).

As John Martz argues in his article, “Party Elites and Leadership in Colombia and Venezuela”, the Colombia two party system is really just one party. The Conservatives and Liberals in Colombia come from the same upper class families and attend the same schools. The politicians who are inside the Colombian government usually have familial ties; there are generations of the same family on each side of the party system. During the National Front it was impossible to be part of the political society if one did not align themselves with either the

Conservative or Liberal party. The connection was needed to attain any sort of responsibility in the Colombian government (Martz 1992, 99).

The Catholic Church had taken an active role in La Violencia. Though the hierarchy had said the church did not participate in politics, many priests and bishops denounced the liberals and supported the violence against them. Because of the bipartisan support the Catholic Church did not escape the violence that occurred throughout the country. During La Violencia "churches were burned and priests and nuns killed or assaulted both in urban riots that followed the assassination of Gaitán in 1948, and in occasional incidents in rural areas during the violent years of the late 1940s and early 1950s"(Dix 1980, 315). Because of the destruction that La Violencia caused, the Catholic Church was eager for peace and safety. Though the church had often spoken out against the Liberal party they acknowledged and supported the National Front. In return the Liberal party acknowledged the Catholic Church as the main religion in Colombia and agreed not to threaten their religious supremacy (Dix 1980, 315). The Liberals and Conservatives knew that by gaining the Catholic Church's support they would be legitimizing their coalition. The Catholic Church also benefited from the National Front because they were guaranteed safety for priests and nuns as well as security in their position of religious power.

The main problem with the National Front, however, was its alienation of the mass populace of Colombia. By having a joint agreement to continue switching sides every term the people in Colombia were not able to have a say in their government. In many ways it was the same as having a dictator run the country. The people were not able to voice their concerns or vote for change because the two political parties had already made the decision for them (Martz 1992, 104). Violence was also a main concern during this period. The violence of La Violencia

did not end with the dictatorship of Rojas Pinilla and it did not end with the development of the National Front. The violence in each of these time periods simply changed locations.

It was during the period of the National Front that Colombia would first feel the effects of the guerrilla organizations that currently plague the country. The guerilla groups that developed during La Violencia were dismantled with the beginning of the National Front. A forced peace followed the dismantling of the first Liberal guerrillas (Palacios 2006, 162).

Following the Cuban Revolution and the Maoist Revolution in China, guerilla organizations in the same vein began to form in Colombia. The National Liberation Army (ELN) and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) are the two most recognized guerilla groups developed during this period. These two guerrilla organizations are dominating current discourse about civil unrest in Colombia and the ELN is a direct formation from the Cuban revolution and Che Guevara's writings. The ELN looked for more long term changes in the Colombian government and wanted socialist change. The FARC, however, developed directly from La Violencia. It was developed during the mobilizations of the agrarian and indigenous movements of the 1920s and 1930s. FARC would not come to prominence until the National Front lifted the ban on Communist parties that Pinilla had set up during his dictatorship (Palacios 2006, 191-192).

The end of the National Front period occurred in 1974. The accord that had been signed in Spain by the two parties allowed for an extension, but the groups agreed not to renew the document. Though the National Front had allowed a sharing of the government the two parties still had their share of conflicts inside the government. Peace was still elusive for Colombia and the politicians knew the period of the National Front had come to an end.

During the National Front the Catholic Church worked to stay out of politics. While it cannot be denied that priests will use the pulpit for their own purposes, the bishops' conference and the hierarchy of the church promoted a focus on the practitioners of the faith. The Church set forth to make new dioceses during this period and a new bureaucratic office to study the church and society. "The church also expanded its social and pastoral outreach through a variety of initiatives, notably the radio schools of Accion Cultural Popular and a range of Catholic Action groups including Jesuit inspired trade unions"(Levine 1977 231). By taking the initiative to form organizations with the people and breaking their ties with the political order the church felt that it was becoming more self reliant. The bishops' conference realized, during La Violencia, that the Colombian society had very violent tendencies and that the political order was not capable of controlling itself. The conference felt it was their job to support the people and give them the structure that they needed through the church (Levine 1977 231). Millions of Colombians have been displaced by the violence that is taking place in the country. They have had to start refugee communities in cities such as Cartagena and Medellin. This mass movement of people has also contributed workers to the illegal drug trade. Because Colombia does not have the necessary amount of jobs for all citizens people have had to look for other options.

Drugs, Guerillas and Religion

Thousands of peasant farmers have been displaced due to the violence in Colombia. According to Francisco E. Thoumi in his article, "Illegal Drugs in Colombia: From Illegal Economic Boom to Social Crisis", it is in these rural regions that most of the coca crops are grown. These regions of displaced peasants also have weak connections with the government. The political chaos of the country has made it easy for the illegal drug trade to take place as well as trafficking in arms and chemicals. The guerrilla organizations have also taken part in the drug industry. The other options to make a living for those living below the poverty line are small.

Colombia has been consumed by violence in the country and the politicians for the most part have put the needs of the people last (Thoumi 2002, 108).

In the 1980s the illegal drug industry was seeing a boom. The two major drug cartels were located in Cali and Medellin. The members of these drug cartels played to the people and to the politicians. The leader of the Medellin drug cartel was Pablo Escobar. Some called Escobar a type of Robin Hood because he spent money on public works projects around Medellin. Escobar also funded a politician and made sure he had a position in the Colombian Congress. The Cali cartel also bought politicians and funded prominent candidates (Thoumi 2002, 111).

Violence was the normal way of accomplishing goals in the drug cartel world. Both the Cali and Medellin Cartels were known for their violent forms of punishing their enemies and when the guerrillas also became a part of the movement of illegal drugs even more violence occurred. Because the “coca” is worth so much more when it is turned into cocaine, the drug lords find it in their best interest to keep the product safe. In the 1980’s and 1990’s drug cartels were allowed to flourish because the government was so weak. Everyone had their price and the cartels were willing to use big bribes in order to ensure their agendas were the main concern of politicians and other officials (Thoumi 2002, 112).

One reason that Thoumi gives for the drug eradication being such a low priority for the Colombian government is that they felt the blame should go to the end user. For the most part drugs are shipped outside of Colombia, especially to the U.S. It is the mindset of Colombia that it is the user who should take final responsibility. If there was no market there would be no product (Thoumi 2002, 113). Countries such as the U.S disagree with this mindset.

Since the mid-1990s there has been a more severe resistance to the illegal drug industry. Most major players in the drug industry have either been captured by the military or killed. Pablo

Escobar was shot by police and since his death the Medellin drug cartel has fallen into dispute over who should rule. The end of the large drug cartels does not mean the end of the drug trade. Smaller organizations have come into play and the FARC have also taken an active role in the drug industry. The drug cartels that have been imprisoned also have the ability to run their organizations from prison. The jails are understaffed and the staff that does work is underpaid (Vellinga 2004, 81).

The United States has also become involved in eradicating the drugs with the signing of Plan Colombia. More troops are being trained to fight the guerrillas and aerial spraying occurs which is supposed to kill the crops. Though the Colombian government continues to promote Plan Colombia as a success, “coca” is still being produced and illegal drugs continue to make their way into the U.S. Many members of the 2007 U.S. congress think a change needs to be made in Plan Colombia as the present one does not give coca farmers any other feasible option for making a living. The families who plant the coca find a lucrative position in the farming of coca and it is hard to give that job up when it is the only way to survive

The Colombian government is faced with the problem of a rigid social structure and failed attempts to eradicate coca. The corruption in government and the money that is made in the drug trade make it hard to stop farmers from growing coca and leaders from turning a blind eye. The role of the Catholic Church in this fight seems elusive. Even though Catholic bishops speak out against the drug trade and verbally support social change for the farmers, little is being done. After Vatican II and the meeting of CELAM in Medellin the Catholic bishops of Colombia promoted a retreat back into the Church. The hierarchy of the Colombian church feared the return of violence to the country and promoted a more spiritual path for the priests (Levine 1977, 237).

In Colombia, over 95% of the people are baptized in the Catholic Church. Politics and career choices do not affect the religion that the citizens of Colombia practice. In Colombia even the drug lords claim to be practicing Catholics (Williams and Guerrieri 1999, 15). Though the drug lords consider themselves Catholic it does not mean that the Catholic Church condones their activities. When it comes to conflict between the government and the people the church has chosen to withdraw and focus on spiritual guidance. “The bishops are well aware of the charge that, after all, talk is cheap, and the church does little actually to implement its many advanced documents. This accusation is indeed often accepted, with the caveat that the hierarchy as a whole has not wanted to go beyond general documents” because they do not want to fail at programs they are not sure will succeed (Levine 1977, 236).

Conclusion

The ties between the Catholic Church and the politics of Colombia have been entrenched from the first arrival of the Spanish on the shores of Latin America. These long standing ties are still felt in both organizations. The violent history of politics in Colombia involved the Catholic Church and, because of this distrust, is still felt among those who are most adversely affected. The violence is not over guerillas that are still a relevant threat to all cities in Colombia. The FARC have control of several rural areas and Colombia has one of the highest displaced populations, ranking it among African nations who are also facing civil war.

The Church has tried to break her ties to politics, but the influence is still felt. Vatican II and CELAM promoted a move back into the church and a focus on the poor. In Colombia these moves have gone too slow. The Catholic hierarchy has promoted a move back to the church and a focus on the spiritual life of Colombians. Though this has occurred they still face the problem of mass poverty. The government of Colombia has focused on the drug war and fighting the guerillas instead of working on social development. Humanitarian groups, such as Amnesty

International, rank Colombia as one of the poorest in human rights. The Catholic Church, as a unit, has done little to combat this problem. There have been separate cells that have been put to work, but overall the Catholic Church has left the social reform to the government. Any work within the church has had to follow the rigid rules and structure of the church hierarchy.

In order to understand religious movements and their small amounts of success in Colombia one must first understand Colombia. The country has developed distrust for any large organization and it is hard to organize the working class. While the Catholic Church has stepped in to help in other countries, it has not in Colombia. The fear of a loss of power is too great to the Colombian Catholic hierarchy. Daniel Levine hopes that the process is simply slow moving and it is the hope of many that more priests will take the initiative to work more closely with the people. The church, however, fears a return to violence and prefers the status quo. Programs that are supported by the Catholic Church in Colombia must first be supported by the church hierarchy. All programs need to prove they are true to Catholic doctrine. Since Vatican II, the Colombian Church would prefer to stay in the spiritual realm rather than move out into the communities and risk herself in the here and now which is not being true to the promises of the Medellin Conference.

CHAPTER 3
THE COLOMBIAN CHURCH FROM POPE JOHN XXIII TO PUEBLA

A Preferential Option for the Poor

In 1958 Pope John the XXIII took his seat at the head of the Catholic Church. He was seen by some as an interim pope. Because of his age not many in the College of Cardinals thought he would live very long. John XXIII did not live long and died of cancer in 1963, but his short papacy did not stop him from setting in motion some of the most dramatic changes the Catholic Church has ever seen. Pope John XXIII wrote several encyclicals and opened the Second Vatican Council in order to discuss drastic changes that needed to occur within the church. Many of the changes coming out of Vatican II are based on the liturgy, however the document *Gaudium et Spes* focuses on the state of Catholics worldwide. Following along the lines of several of John XXIII's encyclicals before the council, the final document of Vatican II centered on the poverty that faced a majority of the Catholic Church.

Bishops from all around the world presented themselves for Vatican II. When it was over they went home to discuss the changes that needed to be made. In Latin America the bishops were already aware of the damage caused by dictatorships, poverty and hunger. In order to set in motion the changes promoted by Vatican II the cardinals met in Medellín, Colombia in 1968. At the meeting in Medellín cardinals and bishops worked together to look for solutions to the problems that faced the majority of Catholics. Poverty, hunger, and humanitarian issues were at the top of the agenda. The members of the Medellín Council agreed that the citizens of Latin America faced too many injustices and it was their duty to speak out against them. For the first time the cardinals and bishops publicly recognized poverty and that there were options for the poor people. Liberation Theology emerged from the meetings in Medellín and it still remains a highly contested topic in Latin American Catholicism.

Ten years after Medellín the cardinals and bishops met again to discuss the progression of the Latin American Catholic Church in Puebla, Mexico. The first meeting was opened by Pope Paul VI and Puebla was opened by Pope John Paul II. It was at Puebla that the term “preferential option for the poor” was coined. By using this term the Bishops were announcing yet again that the poor were the main concern of the Catholic Church. Since John XXIII, however, the popes have progressively become more conservative. Though the documents of the Catholic Church have promoted extensive development for the poor the actions of the hierarchy of the church, since the election of Pope John Paul II, have been contradictory.

Because of a lack of unity inside the church on how to handle issues such as poverty and class division, each country in Latin America has taken a different approach to the documents of John XXIII and Vatican II. Bishops have taken a much more liberal and active approach to these documents in countries that were affected by dictatorship, such as Chile and Brazil. They promote Christian Base Communities (CEBs) and have an active presence in their communities. Countries, such as Colombia, which did not face the censorship of violent dictators, have been much slower and more conservative in their actions towards poverty. There have been examples, however, of base communities in action.

Colombia has taken a much slower approach to development, but from the 1960s to the 1980s there was a small development in CEBs in rural areas. The diocese of Facatativá was the shining example of the Colombian bishops trying to alleviate the poverty in the country. In other dioceses such as Cali, Jesuit priests developed programs that resembled CEBs. Because of a lack of priests in rural areas, laity were trained to help with the problems of everyday poverty (Levine 1992, 96). A major problem that the church faces is the on going war with the guerillas. The people of Colombia have been faced with a forty plus year war with the guerillas.

Trust is hard to attain in rural areas because of links to the elite and corrupt politics. Deciding how to take action has slowed the Catholic hierarchy down and caused friction between the Catholic hierarchy and other religious orders that enjoy certain autonomy. The Colombian Catholic Church has taken a long time to find the correct tone for their message. In order to keep with the conservative nature of the Catholic Church they take hard line stances on topics such as abortion and violence. They are vocal on issues that, though not easily solved, are easy to convey a “universal Catholic opinion”. Topics such as poverty have not been discussed as openly and as the years have progressed no longer seem to be a major concern of the hierarchy.

The Second Vatican Council and Pope John XXIII

Pope John XXIII and the Church’s Acknowledgement of Poverty

When Pope John XXIII came to power a liberal tide turned in the Catholic Church. Pope John XXIII’s most important encyclicals were on the sanctity of all human life. Though he did not coin the phrase, he believed in a preferential option for the poor. In his encyclicals, *Christianity and Social Progress* and *Message for Peace*, the pope discusses the need for change in developing countries. He did not condemn the social structure of developing nations, but he stated it was the duty of those at the top to hear those at the bottom. Pope John XXIII warned that ignoring the masses of poor would only lead to unrest and massive upheavals.

At the end of 1959, Pope John XXIII wrote two encyclicals in the span of three months. The first was the *Encyclical on the Rosary: Prayer for the Church, Missions, International and Social Problems*. This encyclical was short in comparison to the others he wrote, but it also carried a hopeful tone. The Pope was consistent, however, in his warnings to world leaders that inequality would lead to destruction. He differs from his first encyclical with his hope for the future. According to the Pope, “We see all mankind striving for a better future. We see the awakening of a mysterious force, and this permits us to hope that men will be drawn by a right

conscience and a sense of duty to advance the real interests of human society” (John XXIII Sept. 1959, 4). The Pope states that his hopes are for equality, justice and peace. As he will state in other encyclicals, prayer is very important. The first encyclical promotes prayer of the rosary for the leaders and citizens of the world as well as for the priests who are getting ready for missionary work.

The second encyclical of 1959 came in November when Pope John XXIII wrote *Encyclical on the Missions, Native Clergy, and Lay Participation*. This encyclical shares some themes with the previous ones, but it also has ideas that would resurface in *Gaudium et Spes*. In the November encyclical the Pope discusses the importance of missionary work and the job that the priests going abroad have to do. In the September encyclical he says it is necessary to pray for them and that he is pleased and hopeful in the work they are about to do. The November encyclical goes into much more detail about the work they will be doing. John XXIII promoted the movement of priests into rural areas. He felt that it was the duty of religious orders to be more active in the lives of the millions of Catholics worldwide.

Pope John the XXIII states the importance not only of conversion but of evangelization, development and education (John XXIII Nov. 1959, 4). Though the Pope makes it clear that religion is the most important work of the missionaries, he also wants them to teach the people how to be self sufficient. In his encyclical he discusses the necessity of the people working together in order to form a community. This can be seen as the seed for the idea of Christian Based Communities that would later develop in Latin America. Catholic Action which was mentioned in Pope John XXIII’s first encyclical is mentioned again in the November encyclical. These organizations can also be seen as the early forms of Christian Based Communities. The Pope, however, pleads for organization and for obedience to bishops in the region where each

will live and work. The bishops in Colombia heeded the Pope's warning. In developing CEBs in Colombia they started with small projects and focused their efforts on rural communities. The Colombian bishops kept a strict watch on the foreign priests. They enforced a strict code on how social change should occur and anyone who pushed their boundaries had their contract terminated. This was the case with several priests working in Cali, Colombia.

The November encyclical has an important message about culture and the need for the foreign priests to understand and accept their new surroundings. Pope John XXIII also states that cultural norms for each region are important and should be held intact. He believes that well instructed priests who are born in the home country can be a great asset. The Pope states that these priests have a connection to all the people and often relate better to the "educated citizens of their own countries ..." (John XXIII Nov. 1959, 7). Culture will also be of great importance in *Gaudium et Spes*. The Bishops will also build off of Pope John XXIII's documents by recognizing the need to keep and work within the cultural norms of the host country.

Culture, "flows immediately from the spiritual and social character of man" and "has constant need of a just liberty in order to develop" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 38). The bishops felt that to try and change man too drastically or force him to conform would mean a loss of freedom and identity. They felt that both priests going abroad to work with different regions and governments in different regions had to recognize man's need for liberty. This document promoted the liberation of man. The bishops saw the inequality of the world and the oppression that was taking place at the time and were looking for ways to verbally denounce oppression.

As Pope John XXIII did before them, the bishops who wrote *Gaudium et Spes* were vocalizing their sadness and hope for a better future. The tone of the bishops was one of disappointment towards governments, but also of hope for man. They stated, repeatedly, in the

document that the governments were facing uprisings if they did not fix their corruption and seek equality for all citizens. The bishops, however, went one step further than Pope John XXIII did, because they told the people that they had rights. They asked that they first exhaust all powers of negotiation, but that they did not have to continue to bear unjust situations. The bishops were looking for ways to support the people whereas Pope John XXIII asked them to be patient while he pleaded with the governments. Pope John XXIII was cautious because he feared the possibility of war and chaos that could result from a mass uprising.

On September 8th, 1961 Pope John the XXIII gave his *Encyclical on Christianity and Social Progress*. Five months earlier he had released his *Message for Peace*. These two documents were important because they recognized the need for social change in not only developing regions but also developed nations. The documents laid the responsibility for this change in the hands of those in power. Though both documents call for peace and change *Gaudium et Spes* takes a more forceful tone.

Pope John the XXIII 's writings in both his encyclicals on *Christianity and Social Progress* and *Message for Peace* stress the need for change within the system. He states in his encyclical that wealth is accumulated by a few in developing countries while the larger working class suffers almost unbearable working and living conditions. This situation, according to the Pope causes "...a spirit of indignation and open protest on the part of the workingman, and a widespread tendency to subscribe to extremist theories far worse in their effects than the evils they purported"(John XXIII May 1961, 3). The Pope is adamant throughout the document that the only possible way to change the situation is from within the system. He lays the responsibility and the blame in the hands of the powerful. The Pope states that it is their Christian duty to alleviate the pressures that are placed upon the poor.

At the opening of the encyclical, however, it would seem that his adamant desire for peace is more important than the economic and social problems facing the poor. The Pope states, “Christianity is the meeting-point of earth and heaven...inducing him to raise his mind above the changing conditions of this earthly existence and reach upwards for the eternal life of heaven,” (John XXIII May 1961,1). The Pope also states, towards the end of his encyclical that through social equity, peace and prosperity is available for all.

The violence that faced Colombians was vivid in the minds of priests and bishops as they started development projects. Politics was not a subject that the bishops wanted to be part of their dialogue. The priests who went into rural communities had to first gain the trust of the people. The history of La Violencia left a scar on the population of Colombia. The Catholic Church had been involved in that part of the political history of the country and was forced, through their actions, to regain the trust of the people.

The *Encyclical on Christianity and Social Progress* looks for options to change the corruption in developing nations. It gives governments the option to change their ways and to promote structural change. As with his previous encyclicals John XXIII is looking for peaceful options. The Pope states several times in his encyclicals that revolt can only lead to and cause extreme disorder. The Pope puts the burden of social change in the hands of the government. It is important to note that this encyclical was written at the time of the Cuban Revolution when Fidel Castro had taken over power in Cuba, and the United States and the Soviet Union were still embroiled in the middle of the Cold War. Pope John XXIII saw a world on the brink of another war and fear of dictators coming to power. He sought peaceful options.

The *Message for Peace* is also very adamant that peace should be upheld, above all. The Pope states in this message that even though the Apostle Paul promotes the use of military

weapons in his Letter to the Ephesians, in the end he promotes prayer above all (John XXIII Sept. 1961, 3). His adamant call for peace in a world on the brink of war had a tone that was almost pleading with the world's leaders.

Pope John XXIII recognizes in his message, like in his encyclicals, the need for social change. The Pope states that, "The Church by her very nature cannot remain indifferent to human suffering, even were it no more than anxiety and anguish" (John XXIII Sept. 1961, 1). In this quote the early roots of *Gaudium et Spes* are evidenced. The Pope is stating that the poor cannot be ignored and the Catholic Church will not stand idly by while governments ignore them. This statement is one of the more proactive statements seen in his documents. *Gaudium et Spes* follows a similar path with its tone which is also proactive. The authors of the document are proactive bishops and priests looking for ways to alleviate the social and economic pressures accumulated by those living below the poverty line.

The Colombian Catholic Church is divided in many ways. Though the Catholic Church in Colombia is known to have strong ties to the Vatican they are far enough away to ignore certain teachings. The hierarchy of the Colombian Catholic Church is highly conservative while many of the priests who work in rural areas are much more liberal. During the late 1950s and early 1960s the Catholic hierarchy in Colombia chose to, for the most part, ignore the encyclicals of John XXIII (Williams and Guerrieri 1999, 20). The encyclicals of John XXIII were an acknowledgment of poverty and injustice in the world. In Colombia poverty and the social divide are ignored. The conservatism that is felt in the hierarchy and the ties to the Conservative party all contributed to the refusal to actively acknowledge the writings of John XXIII. Because many of the members of the Catholic hierarchy are related or have close ties to the elite in Colombia it

was easier for the hierarchy to ignore the issue than fight family or friends (Williams and Guerrieri 1999, 21).

The Second Vatican Council and *Gaudium et Spes*

One of the sixteen Vatican II documents, *Gaudium et Spes*, focuses on the need for human dignity and social change. The tone is more forceful and almost more willing to promote revolt. The Cardinals and Pope Paul the VI do not call for revolution. They do, however, recognize that all men and women have worth. It is important to note that *Gaudium et Spes* recognizes the plight of women much more than Pope John XXIII and many world leaders of the time did. The bishops recognize the work being done by women and the struggle that they incur on a day to day basis. The conditions in which many find themselves are not healthy, according to the document, and human worth must be recognized. Though it would seem that these three documents are stating similar ideas, their tone is not the same. The urgency in both cases is directed towards the elite of the world, but while Pope John the XXIII is telling those living below the poverty line to be patient, *Gaudium et Spes* is telling the same people to recognize that they have rights.

There is positive energy in *Gaudium et Spes*. It is positive hope for change and the drive to change the problems of the time. While Pope John the XXIII's documents seem to hint at fear and caution, *Gaudium et Spes* pushes for change. It is interesting to note that Pope John the XXIII opened the Second Vatican Council in order to promote change in the Catholic Church, yet he seemed much more cautious in his writings than the writings that would follow from the Second Vatican Council. However, Pope John XXIII opened the door. These documents are considered some of the most influential and radical documents that the Vatican has produced. Because of *Gaudium et Spes*, Liberation Theology could be formed. The Cardinals would later

back away from the radical calls in *Gaudium et Spes*, but the recognition of poverty and the masses living in poverty was a giant step for a conservative and hierarchical church.

In a region where most of the population lives in poverty *Gaudium et Spes* acknowledged their standing. The document was considered radical and a call to action. The Colombian Catholic Church was forced to acknowledge the situation that faces a majority of the citizens. The first priests to arrive in what would become Colombia were Jesuits. In the Colonial period the Jesuits were Catholic hardliners, known for their piety, orthodoxy and devotion to the Pope. After Colombia gained its independence from Spain, the Catholic Church would assume a political role. The Church in Colombia helped to found or establish the Conservative party. During political disruptions before Vatican II, the church would often side with the Conservative leaders and priests would be instructed to give homilies that sided with the Conservative party.

Acknowledging the social issues that faced Colombia was difficult for the Colombian Catholic Church's hierarchy. They had been a player in the violence that had overtaken many of the cities and were known to side with the Conservative party. To acknowledge the document of *Gaudium et Spes* was almost an acknowledgement of guilt for the hierarchy. During Vatican II the bishops in Colombia had been promoting the status quo. They were against passing a bill in 1961 for equal legal rights for women stating that it was threat to familial unity (Schoultz 1973, 243). The conservative nature of the Catholic Church was also felt when Colombia became the first country in Latin America to legally adopt policy regarding population control. In the late 1960's the Colombian government felt in order to grow economically they had to control their population (Ott 1977, 2). Though the Catholic Church was against the use of birth control they understood the problem that the government faced. The government worked on legislature for population control throughout the 1960s and the Catholic hierarchy attended both Vatican II and

the CELAM meeting in Medellín. Because of the liberal nature of these meetings the Catholic hierarchy in Colombia, though not willing to accept contraceptives, opened its own office of the National Population Council (Ott 1977, 6).

Vatican II was meant to discuss the meaning of the Catholic Church and how she should progress in the modern world. The Document *Gaudium et Spes* recognized that a majority of the Catholic Church's followers lived in poverty. It also stated that the Catholic Church recognized their struggle. This recognition was important for Latin America, especially Colombia, because the Catholic Church's hierarchy had aligned itself with the wealthy for so long. Unlike other Latin American countries, the majority of priests in Colombia were Colombian by birth. This meant that they had allegiance to certain families and political orders. Colombia also faced the problem that their native priests often had an inferior education when compared to the foreign priests (Levine 1979, 56). In order to fully understand how Vatican II would affect Latin America, the Latin American Bishops Conference (CELAM) called for a meeting of all Latin American Bishops in Medellín, Colombia.

The Latin American Episcopal Conference in Medellín

The Documents of Medellín

In 1968 the Council of Latin American Bishops met in Medellín, Colombia. At this meeting the focus of the Latin American Bishops was the condition of poverty that encompassed the mass majority of Latin Americans. The documents that were produced from this meeting focused on social justice and peace. The bishops felt that Latin America was severely lacking in these two elements and that Latin America was dominated by a small minority of wealthy land and business owners. The bishops stated in both documents on peace and justice that the rich needed to be more understanding and compassionate towards the poor. They also stated that they

in no way condoned any rebellions, especially any dealing with Marxism. The bishops wanted social, economic, political and structural change, but only within the law.

The First Document of the Bishops in Medellín was on Justice. The document stressed the need for justice for not only the poor, but for women and those who were part of the newly forming middle class. The opening paragraph of this document states,

The young demand their right to enter universities or centers of higher learning for both intellectual and technical training; the women, their right to legitimate equality with men; the peasants better conditions of life; or if they are workers better prices and security in buying and selling; the growing middle class feels frustrated by the lack of expectations (O'Brien 1977, 549).

The bishops felt that the people should begin to form organizations that could help form a new society. It is also important to note that the bishops did discuss in this document that political change was necessary; however, they felt it must be conducted within legal norms. The bishops wanted the workers' and peasants' unions to have sufficient rights.

The Council of Latin American Bishops felt that in order for there to be progress in Latin American communities, political change had to come first. "Public authority has the duty of facilitating and supporting the creation of means of participation and legitimate representation of the people, or if necessary the creation of new ways to achieve it" (O'Brien 1977, 556). The bishops felt that at the current time those in power were only concerned with their own needs and the needs of the people who had close ties to them. As history has shown, Latin American governments were severely corrupt and nepotism has always been a great problem. It was at the conference in Medellín that the Bishops of Latin America said that they supported the majority who lived in poverty. If this was true it would be a drastic turn around from the Church that was in place pre-Vatican II (Dodson 1986, 39).

Document two of the bishops' council deals with Peace. The bishops felt that peace and justice were dependent upon each other. The bishops felt that development would lead to peace

in Latin America and to have development there had to be equality. Each part of the problems they laid out in their document was linked to another grievance they had in their article on peace. The bishops went into greater depth on the problems of inequality between the classes and the corruption that was going on in both politics and business. The bishops were directing the document on peace towards the rich who played the leading role in corruption. The main fear of the bishops was that the poor were becoming more and more aware of their situation and therefore more prone to rebellion (O'Brien 1977, 562-563).

The document on peace was important to Colombia because it is a nation that has severe corruption issues. The government was run during the National Front without the voice of the people. And "throughout most of the twentieth century the Liberal and Conservative parties employed violent and/or institutional mechanisms to exclude popular opposition and dominate Colombia's political system"(Aviles 2001, 35). Those who have power in Colombia are the few who hold the money. The strongest economic players are the large scale coffee growers. The Colombian government has done little to thwart their monopoly on the industry and countries such as the US who trade with Colombia have not voiced concerns with this lack of justice (Aviles 2001, 35). The bishops were writing the Medellín documents in hope that those involved in the rampant corruption throughout Latin America would listen and change their scandalous ways.

The bishops voiced their concern over the possibility of rebellion coming from those living in poverty. Even Pope Paul the VI noticed the massive separation between the rich and the poor when he visited Colombia saying,

...social and economic development has not been equitable in the great continent of Latin America; and while it has favored those who helped establish it in the beginning, it has neglected the masses of native population, which are almost always left at a subsistence level and at times are mistreated and exploited harshly (O'Brien 1977, 562).

The bishops felt that the inequality that divided the rich and the other classes had to be resolved, but without bloodshed. According to *Gaudium et Spes*, this was not the Christian way to resolve the conflict and violence could not be condoned. It is also important to note that the bishops were aware of violence being used by those in power to uphold their own positions and keep the poor in poverty. The bishops said blatantly in their document on peace that violence on the part of those in power was wrong and only promoted more violence. The more that violence occurred the harder it would be to gain the trust of the people. A majority of Catholics suffered under violent political regimes and the injustices that befell those who live at or below the poverty line.

The documents of Medellín came at a time when Colombia was facing political changes. The National Front was coming to an end and the political divisions in the country were being reworked. The church, however, did not have to fear its place in society because in 1973, President Misael Pastrana signed a Concordat with the Vatican. This document did not call Catholicism the state religion but the religion of the majority. It also allowed the pope to pick the bishops in Colombia. The ability of the pope to pick the bishops in Colombia strengthened the ties between Colombia and the Vatican and guaranteed that bishops would be conservative or liberal in nature based on the pope (Williams and Guerrieri 1999, 19).

In Daniel Levine's article, "Authority in Church and Society: Latin American Models", the author looks at the mentality of bishops after Vatican II and Medellín. The bishops' main concerns were always on authority, the laity's role in Catholicism and its participation. After Vatican II, however, the Colombian bishops began to rank their social commitment higher. The importance of authority was always a main concern but now their commitment to social progress also became important (Levine 1978, 529). As with most progress not all bishops are happy to include the laity, but many understood it as a necessity. In Colombia the population was rapidly

growing and there were not enough priests to support the growth. By incorporating the laity the Catholic Church could make sure, with proper education, the Catholic doctrine was being taught in Colombia (Levine 1978, 530).

Why the Urgency

The urgency that was felt in the previous documents was because of the change that was occurring throughout the world in politics. The Cuban Dictator, Fidel Castro, came to power in 1959 and promoted his communist regime. Before Castro another dictator, Bautista, had run the country forcing a majority of the people to live in poverty. Juan Peron came to power in Argentina in 1946. He would serve three terms as president with his second and third terms divided by a military coup. Peron's government was the center of scandal and corruption and, like most of Latin America, poverty was rampant. In Europe the bishops felt the hardship of reconstruction. After World War II half of Europe fell under the Soviet Block. Because of the anti-religious nature of Marxism, the Catholic Church feared the effects of Communism. In Europe many of the future Popes such as John Paul II and Benedict XVI saw first hand what they thought were the destructive tendencies of communism. Pope John XXIII's writings did not favor the massive political shifts that were occurring throughout the world. He, along with the other bishops, wrote with a sense of urgency in hopes that governments would recognize the destruction they were causing not only for their people, but also for their future in power.

Colombia had not seen many forms of government. The Conservatives and Liberals continuously exchanged power. The Rojas Pinilla dictatorship was short-lived and not similar to any other dictatorships in Latin America. The nature of Colombian politics and the close ties of the hierarchy to the elite in the country made the Colombian Catholic Church lack the urgency that was building in the rest of Latin America and the world. The bishops in Colombia felt that being active in social activity was another form of politicking (Levine and Wilde 1977, 235).

Even after the Medellín conference the Catholic bishops in Colombia were making highly conservative statements. The bishops in Colombia recognized that both Vatican II and Medellín were calling for action, but after the violence that occurred in the 1940's they were unwilling to take action. One bishop stated:

The most important thing is to spread ideas, I do not give out money for food, for houses, or for welfare projects. Because if I can provide ideas to the rich, I create in them awareness of the need to create new sources of employment. Thus I get more out of giving ideas to the rich. No, no, no. Not a single piece of bread. Man does not live on bread alone (Levine and Wilde 1977, 236).

This mentality was shared throughout the hierarchy of the Catholic Church. They took the ideas of Vatican II and Medellín and hoped to spread it throughout Colombia by their teachings.

Violence and politics were a threat to the supremacy of the Catholic Church. "Many bishops have vivid memories of the Violencia, and fear that renewed clerical activism in politics (indeed, almost any large-scale activism) will lead to massive bloodshed again"(Levine and Wilde 1977, 237).

Programs that were set in motion were built slowly and methodically so as not to upset the natural order of hieratical practice in the church or the country. The hierarchy of the Catholic Church opened offices to discuss what Colombia needed. After La Violencia began the church recognized the need for more dioceses and a more active role in the lives of Catholics. While they did not promote CEBs to the extent that was seen in other Latin American countries, they did promote their own programs. "The majority thus rejects the notion that the church as an institution is required by its religious commitment to take direct active roles in the promotion of temporal change" (Levine and Wilde 1977, 235). The bishops did not feel that it was their duty to enter the rural areas of Colombia, but they did agree that the laity should. The bishops of Colombia agreed that if trained right, the laity of the Catholic Church could be a great asset, as long as they did not pose a threat (Levine and Wilde 1977, 237).

Diocesan Development in Action

According to the Library of Congress' country study on Colombia "the bishop's inability to agree on an approach to social reform and to implement it through strong effective leadership increase' the fragmentation with the church in Colombia and the controversy surrounding the latter's role" (Hanratty and Meditz 1988). The Catholic Church, according to the country study, has significant influence in education, social welfare, and union organizations. The church also has research institutions in order to conduct studies on the socioeconomic condition of Colombians. Though education seems to rank highest on the bishops agenda there are several programs that the conference developed including Colombian Charities and Communal Action (Hanratty and Meditz 1988). The groups, however, do not promote self-sufficiency. They provide clothing to the homeless and priests are also key-organizers refusing to give power to the laity (Hanratty and Meditz 1988). For in-depth look at diocesan initiatives research conducted by Daniel Levine is used. The leading scholar on diocesan development in Colombia is Daniel Levine. His work focuses on the development of social activism in Colombia through the church and in other Catholic programs. Levine is critical of the Catholic Church and her lack of initiative but does give good examples of diocesan projects that were developed and strengthened post Vatican II.

The Diocese of Facatativá

The documents of John XXIII and the start of Vatican II promoted change in the Catholic Church. John XXIII feared the rise of the masses in bloodshed. He saw the persecution, the poverty and the injustice and realized that left unchecked it could spiral out of control. The church has always promoted order and stability. If the masses living in poverty fought against their injustices it could, in the pope's mind, lead to chaos. Communism was not an option for the

church. The Cuban revolution weighed heavy on the minds of the bishops of Latin America. Communism was more of a possibility than they had realized and in order to stop its spread something had to be done.

Though Colombia has been known as a conservative stronghold there have been a few exceptions. After the peak of La Violencia the bishops of Colombia began to promote the formation of new dioceses. One of the new dioceses was Facatativá, which was founded in 1962. This new diocese was made up of a majority of small rural communities. Facatativá is 28 miles outside of Bogotá and in the department of Cundinamarca; (the country of Colombia is divided into departments which can be compared to the division of states in the United States). The first two bishops of this diocese were considered progressive. Though Facatativá was a new diocese the population was rapidly expanding. The number of priests and nuns in the community stayed stagnant and the bishops were forced to look for other alternatives for assistance. The bishops promoted the use of laity because of the rapid expansion. They were forced to be innovative and use the resources they had (Levine 1992, 95). The bishops of Facatativá promoted the move of nuns and priests into rural areas. Some communities had only seen a priest for church services and the new bishops felt that a more stable presence was necessary.

Facatativá is used as a case study because of its ability to use priests, nuns and laity to conduct diocesan projects. In Colombia Facatativá was one of several dioceses that were chosen for a pilot program to develop Christian Base Communities (CEBs). “Analysis of Facatativá thus reveals what ‘official’ CEBs can look like in practice and shows their implications for popular culture (Levine 1990, 730). With the small amount of resources that the diocese had they were able to build programs for people in rural communities that were not always considered by the hierarchy of the Catholic Church. The liberal bishops of the diocese of Facatativá used their

minimal resources to create some of the most progressive programs that the Colombian Catholic Church has supported (Levine 1992, 96). The work in the diocese of Facatativá is interesting, not because it is radical or conservative, but rather that it is moderate. The bishops were able to create activities that did not threaten the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, yet they were still able to aid the people and help the rural communities grow (Levine 1992, 94).

Unlike other dioceses in Colombia those priests and nuns working in the center of the diocese were more willing to make the move to the rural areas. The shift helped to develop Catholicism in more rural regions of the country. “One high-ranking prelate stated that ‘from the beginning, the diocese has been a pillar of base communities in Colombia, and was chosen for pilot programs in the area’” (Levine 1992, 96). As development progressed in the diocese the high-ranking officials began to push past the conservative nature of the hierarchy. “By the late 1960’s, diocesan documents emphasized the need to promote base communities. The first formal plan for base communities dates from 1972 ...” (Levine 1992, 96). The major goals for the diocese in 1972 were to create base communities, educate the clergy on the trends of the church and to focus on the development of the peasant population. The development that the documents promote is not only spiritual, but also economic and cultural.

In 1970 a Spanish priest, Roman Cortes, arrived in the diocese with the agenda of developing base communities. Cortes came as part of the bishops’ special envoy and worked for the National Advisory Team on base Communities and Lay Ministries of the Colombian Bishops Conference. The organization was supposed to promote Christian base communities in rural areas in Colombia. The program, however, focused more on spirituality than the everyday needs of the people. Cortes worked to develop a relationship with the people and to form a network of base communities. These base communities were first *Cursillos de Cristiandad*. They were

developed in Spain and meant to be bible study classes (Levine 1992, 99). Though Cortes did develop other programs in the region and was an active member in the community, his main goal was the spiritual development of the people and not their economic growth. In 1978 he moved the guerilla stronghold of Caparrapi in order to foster a relationship with Catholics in the region. After seeing the peoples' lack of trust, it became one of Cortes' main goals to rebuild the relationship between the parishioners and the church.

Because of Cortes' charisma the bishops of Colombia took notice. Cortes did not create a divide with the bishops because he promoted cursillos, which were courses on Christianity. The classes on Christianity were Cortes' main project. He promoted a Christian education and along with it came the small base communities. People would gather for class and then form communities. Cortes' success encouraged other dioceses to try similar projects in areas such as home schooling. Young women who were from rural areas were brought to small schools and given a basic education by the Catholic Church. When they completed their coursework they went back to their communities to be teachers. Hogar-Escuela was the name of the program and was formed in 1975 by Dominican sisters. Hogar-Escuela fit into the goals promoted by the Catholic Church in Colombia. "So it is clear, then, that the entire Christian community, united around its legitimate pastors and guided by them, constitute the responsible subject of its own liberation and human promotion"(Levine 1992, 101). The nuns state clearly that their goal is to promote the Catholic Church's ideals and are not a threat to the hierarchy of the church.

The success of the projects in Facatativá encouraged the bishops of Colombia to develop a program with the American charity, Catholic Relief Services (CRS). The project was developed on a small scale in order to guarantee longevity. Since Factativa had been so successful in the development of base communities, the bishops of Colombia used the diocese as

a testing ground for other projects. One program was called Procampesinos and “looked to implement a practical option for the poor by sponsoring numerous small-scale programs of immediate material benefit” (Levine 1992, 102). The Procampesinos program promoted the development of infrastructure first and then the implementation of projects. Money was given by CRS for site visits and the formation of contacts and the attendance at courses given in development. CRS wanted to make sure there was a strong base to support all projects to guarantee sustainability (Levine 1992, 102-103).

The Procampesinos program is an example of the bishops working with outside organizations to help fund development in Colombia. This is not something that occurs often because the Catholic Church has to make sure that the values of Catholicism are always at the root of the project. It is a fact that the Catholic Church in Colombia will break ties with other Catholic organizations if it feels they are too liberal. Another problem with the Colombian Catholic hierarchy is that they kept all their development projects in one region. There were other development projects that occurred throughout the country, but it was Facatativa that received the most support. The important fact remains that, though the diocese had progressive leadership, they were still able to make progress without endangering their relationship with the Catholic hierarchy in the country.

The diocese of Facatativá was started in 1962 (Levine 1992, 94). This was before the document of *Gaudium et Spes* was released by Vatican II. The 1970's were when the major changes occurred in the diocese. The arrival of Father Cortes helped to foster change in the area. The activities did follow along the lines of the teachings of John XXIII. The people were being educated in their religion, but also learning other necessary skills. The people in the communities that Cortes worked were renewed not only in faith but in energy. They began to work as

communities and help each other (Levine 1992, 98). These activities were the desires of Vatican II coming to fruition. The people were given the tools to succeed by the church and then were able to grow on their own. The most important factor relating to the church, however, was the fact that people were attending mass and actively taking part in their religion. Not only were the documents of Vatican II and Medellín being followed but the hierarchy of the Catholic Church was not endangered. For this reason Facatativá was able to develop.

The Cali Project

Facatativá was not the only diocese that was able to prosper during the time of Vatican II and Medellín. Other dioceses were able to enact initiatives to help support the people. Facatativá is considered to be part of rural Colombia. It is located in the mountainous region outside of Colombia and has extreme poverty. Other large cities were also able to make a change. Though Catholicism may look different throughout Colombia it is still visible in all cities major or minor. The city of Cali is one of the largest cities in Colombia. Cali, officially known as Santiago de Cali, is the capital of the department of Valle del Cauca. It has a recognizable name to outsiders because of its role in the drug trade. In the early 1960's, however, the Catholic Church took the initiative in recognizing the need for change. Because of the mass amount of poverty in the city "... the Archdiocese of Cali tried to respond by reorganizing its programs and mobilizing fresh resources, especially from business elite" (Levine 1992, 116-117). By 1982 no new initiative had taken hold and the rapid growth of the city proved to be too much for the archdiocese to support. Each parish had to take their own action and priests and nuns had to step into action.

Cali's rapid growth, without planning, caused barrios to spread out past the original boundaries of the city. Poorer barrios began growing because of the mass migration to the city from rural areas. A set of Basque priests arrived in the popular barrio of El Rodeo not long after the barrio came into existence (Levine 1992, 118). El Rodeo is known for its radicalism and the

priests settled into the same mindset. The Basque priests believed that "... religious values could not be taken in isolation but rather had to emerge as part of an integral project of liberation undertaken in and by the community" (Levine 1992, 119).

The four Basque priests, who arrived in 1970, live in a modest rented home in the barrio. They have never tried to improve their standings in their Basque order or in the Catholic Church and they have worked inside the barrio at the parish center and with several institutes they have promoted over the years. "Grouped around the parish center are some of the institutions promoted over the years: a center of popular culture, a small lending library (now in disuse), a school and a health post, including a nutrition center and a group of low-costing housing units"(Levine 1992, 119). Though the group still resides in the community, they have suffered several setbacks. In the beginning the Basque priests promoted organization of any kind. But in the 1980's they began to feel used by the different political organizations that were developing in the barrio. Because of this disillusionment the priests changed their stance from liberation to forming a religious based community. Currently, they work more on spiritual growth and shy away from political activism (Levine 1992, 120).

Barrio Melendez was another barrio affected by the arrival of Spanish priests. In 1977 four Spanish priests arrived in the barrio and they began to carefully develop programs to aid in community involvement in politics and church activity. "The four cultivated an easygoing, informal style and made themselves familiar and trusted figures in the barrio. They soon recruited a core of people (mostly women) to serve as founders and multipliers of groups" (Levine 1992, 121). The priests were committed to getting the members of the community involved and bringing them back into the church. Soon after the priests' arrival a group of

Colombian sisters from the Javerian Institute arrived to help. These women were “committed to identify with the poor and immerse themselves in popular milieus” (Levine 1992, 120).

The sisters arrived with the intention of working with the base communities that the Spanish priests had formed. The sisters organized the Center for Popular Culture in Barrio Melendez. The Center offers classes in topics such as Colombian history, cooperatives, liberation theology, Bible study, sewing and hairdressing. “The Javerian sisters are less devoted to action per se than were the priests in Barrio El Rodeo and are more concerned with providing a cultural foundation that can inform any action and give it meaning”(Levine 1992, 122). Because the sisters are independent of the archdiocese they are granted more freedom than the Spanish priests who had begun the work in Barrio Melendez. The nuns are part of a religious order from which they receive money for food and housing and are not financially dependent on the diocese. This fact guarantees a certain autonomy. The Spanish priests did not have the same autonomy and when their contracts were abruptly terminated with the diocese they were forced to return to Spain.

Most priests in Colombia are Colombian by birth. If they join orders such as the Jesuits, they have more freedom than those priests who belong to the dioceses. The Spanish priests were forced out of the country because they did not have citizenship and the hierarchy of the church felt threatened by them. Colombian priests who belong to orders such as the Jesuits have the freedom to be more liberal and be supported by their congregation or their order. In Cali this is how many priests succeed (Levine 1990, 744). Because of the large size of Cali and the large number of religious orders, separate from diocesan priests, the community has several distinct differences from Facatativá. The style in Cali is more liberal but not as well organized. The area is much more developed than Facatativá and is less controlled by the hierarchy of the Catholic

Church. Those who participate in organizations are free to come and go as they please and there is a less controlled structure from the church (Levine 1990, 739).

Like Facatativá, Cali experienced the mass violence of La Violencia. The city of Cali, however, has continued to experience violence but in the 1970's the violence was due to the growing drug trade in the city. It was during the 1980's that the Cali drug cartel drew world notoriety for their violence and large scale drug trafficking (Thoumi 2002, 108). The violence and drug trade in Colombia was not an issue the Catholic Church wanted to play an active role in. The memory of La Violencia is still a vivid reminder for both citizens and bishops and the fear of renewed violence through the drug trade has scared the bishops. They preferred to focus on the spiritual side of citizens' lives. In Cali the focus remained on the programs that were already in progress. Little was done to raise awareness on the drug issue, in order to protect the priests, nuns and laity working in the archdioceses of Cali. Concurrently with the drug industry's rise came the call for CELAM to meet. The bishops of Latin America were called to Puebla, Mexico for a meeting. Puebla was meant to be a reassessment of the Medellín documents and how they were working and could work better in Latin America. The meeting in Puebla would prove to be a hindrance to progress in Colombia because of the conservative nature of the conference and the new Pope, John Paul II.

Puebla and an Unlikely Retreat

On January 28th 1979, CELAM convened in Puebla, Mexico. Pope John Paul II, who had been at the head of the Catholic Church for four months, opened the Puebla meeting of CELAM. The tone of the documents that emerged from Puebla followed along the lines of the Medellín documents. Puebla promoted a preferential option for the poor and continued the theme that it was the Catholic Church's duty to help those in need. Puebla, however, has a mixed legacy. Some felt that John Paul II's visit had a direct effect on the meetings of CELAM. The ideology

of the new pope had a conservative feel and promoted a deepening of spirituality and a retreat from the political arena. While some saw Puebla as a continuation of Medellín others who were more radical saw the documents as a call to action.

There were attendees at Puebla who felt that John Paul II had too much influence on the Puebla documents and they felt that his influence was a step in the wrong direction for the Latin American Catholic Church. Father Jon Sobrino felt that John Paul II did not understand the Latin American Church. Sobrino wrote that John Paul II left a definite mark on the Puebla documents. John Paul II's mark on Puebla was to condemn Liberation Theology and call for religious people to stay in the spiritual realm. "More his own seems to be his admonition to priests and religious men and women, urging them to deepen their spirituality rather than dedicating themselves to sociopolitical "radicalisms", or displaying an "exaggerated" interest in the temporal world, or becoming victims of ideological "radicalizations"(Eagleson 1979, 293).

Even though Sobrino was a skeptic of John Paul II's influence on the Puebla documents he also felt that there were certain ties to liberation that could not be broken.

Particularly noteworthy is the endorsement to "liberation". The sense of that term is spelled out and dangers warned against, to be sure, but in substance the reality is stoutly affirmed. There can be no evangelization without integral liberation, and the latter includes liberation from historical misery (Eagleson 1979, 302).

Alexander Wilde saw hope in the Puebla documents. In his article, "Ten years of Change in the Church: Puebla and the Future" Wilde says that the documents of Puebla are a call to action just as the Medellín documents were. According to Wilde, Puebla departs from Medellín in the fact that they went beyond the earlier positions of Medellín (Wilde 1979, 300). The problem with social progress in Colombia, in Wilde's opinion, is that there was never an institutionalized military government. Those Catholic Churches that faced severe oppression under the military are much more progressive in their social stance (Wilde 1979, 301).

In the last document of the conference, the bishops affirm that it is the role of the church to establish organization of social action and to promote human growth and development. The document, however, goes on to say “in so far as it can, it steps in where public authorities and social organizations are absent or missing” (Eagleson 1979, 281). The bishops are promoting a divide between politics and the church. This divide is not hard for the Catholic Church in Colombia to accept because they have promoted such a divide since the end of La Violencia. Like Sobrino, Renato Poblete felt that the pope missed out on the fact that the Latin American Catholic Church is diverse. In his article, “From Medellín to Puebla: Notes for Reflection”, Poblete affirms that the Latin American Church is diverse (Poblete 1979, 32). “Each local church has its own characteristics derived from the richness of its particular history and varied local challenges. Consequently, our reflection must never ignore this dual character—the union of history and destiny...” (Poblete 1979, 32).

The concerns of Latin America are the concerns of the bishops of CELAM. The people throughout Latin America have faced revolution, dictatorship and war. Each country reacted differently to their individual situations. The Colombian Catholic Church of the 1970’s promoted movements such as trade unions and political parties with Christianity at their base. It also promoted social growth with Christianity at its base (Poblete 1979, 33). The end of the active participation, however, came at the end of Puebla. The bishops promoted a move behind church walls and John Paul II elected highly conservative Cardinals. His move to focus on spirituality can be seen in the projects that were then started throughout Colombia. The priests who were considered too liberal were removed from their positions and replaced by those who had a more conservative religious agenda. The hierarchy of the Catholic Church currently focuses on the spirituality of Catholics. The fact that there has been a conversion to Protestants occurring more

rapidly throughout Latin America may make the Catholic hierarchy take notice because it has fallen onto orders such as the Jesuits to promote social change and activism. Other grassroots movements have also developed under the allegiance to the Catholic Church and have taken up the social work that was left by the church at the end of Puebla.

The Catholic Church in Colombia retreated behind church walls after Puebla. Like the Universal Catholic Church, Colombia's Catholic Church moved out of the social world with the election of Pope John Paul II. Since, the election of John Paul II the Catholic Church around the world has been forced to take a much more conservative stance on issues such as politics and social development. John Paul II lived through Communism in Poland and felt that it was not a viable option. John Paul II strongly opposed moves to the left in society and politics. He also felt that the Church should stay in the spiritual world and focus on the morality of the people rather than the living situations of the people. Because of Colombia's close ties to the hierarchy of the church in Rome, the bishops stood by the ideals of the pope. They continue to enforce strict Catholic doctrine and fight any groups that they consider too liberal. In Colombia, grassroots organizations which fall under the Catholic umbrella need the support of the church for legitimacy. If they do not follow the strict rules of the Catholic hierarchy they could lose the support of the church and any trust the people have in them.

CHAPTER 4 CATHOLIC REBELS AND GRASSROOTS MOVEMENTS

The legitimacy of the Catholic Church comes at a high cost. This chapter will explore the grassroots movements with tenuous ties to the Catholic Church. I investigated how they work within and rebel against the Catholic Church. First the rebel priests and their ideology will be discussed. The failures of these priests will be documented as well. Next I will discuss the ideas of the Jesuits. The order is known for its education and liberal thinking. Following the discussion of the Jesuits, the discussion will move to the role of grassroots movements. This section will focus on two powerful organizations that fall under the Catholic Church's protection; first the more liberal Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular (CINEP) and then the conservative El Minuto de Dios. The importance of these movements can be found in the progression of social development in Colombia. The radical priests in the early years spoke in liberal and radical terms, but in the end there was no action. The action in social development has occurred through organizations such as CINEP and El Minuto de Dios.

When the Catholic Church in Colombia retreated from the political arena after the Puebla Conference, other organizations with Catholic ties began to emerge. The church supported an end to violence, but the hierarchy's fear of chaos prevented the adoption of drastic changes. Pope John Paul II wanted the priests to focus on the spirituality of the Catholics worldwide and back away from highly politicized activities (Levine 1985, 302). The Catholic Church hierarchy's main concern was organizational and focused on top down initiatives. CELAM, which is based in Bogota, has vocally criticized the Progressive Catholic Church. The fear of becoming too liberal and Marxist resonates for the bishops in Colombia and so they have stepped back from social development because it seems too political (Levine 1985, 300).

The Catholic Church has worked on minor social development projects but has not engaged in large scale initiatives. Social development plans have been conducted by groups that were started by Catholics who have tenuous ties to the Catholic hierarchy. These groups are not nearly as liberal or as radical as Camilo Torres, but have progressive Catholicism at the base of their doctrine. In the wake of Vatican II, the Medellín Conference, the Puebla Conference and Liberation Theology groups and organizations began to form and they covered the spectrum from liberal to conservative. The most important of these organizations has been CINEP on the liberal side and the Catholic Charismatic Renewal for the conservatives. Each group has taken a different stance on social development, but both have been much more active in social development compared to Catholic hierarchy since the 1980s. All groups involved in social development agree that education is a priority. They are trying to build a society where those who live in poverty have the knowledge to survive and subsist on their own. In the long run the goal is to break the long-standing social class structure.

Rebels in Cassocks

The 1960s witnessed several attempts by Catholic priests in Latin America to liberalize the Catholic Church. The most well known priest of the era was Camilo Torres, a man who had his roots in the upper middle class, was educated in Belgium, and earned a degree in sociology. After Camilo Torres became a priest, he first worked with students and later turned his interests into the political arena. Father Torres was defrocked and died as a member of the guerilla group Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) (Drekonja 1971, 59). There were other priests who also took steps to liberate the Catholic Church. Priests in the Grupo Sacerdotal de Golconda and Sacerdotes Para America Latina (SAL) were all considered a threat to the Catholic hierarchy. These two groups formed after the meeting of CELAM in Medellín. The organizations were made up of priests who were considered radical by the Catholic hierarchy. Though neither of

these groups of priests made the impact that Camilo Torres did, they were liberal thinkers. SAL and Golconda housed priests who wrote and fought against the rigid structure of the Catholic Church (Schoultz 1973, 247).

The 1960s was a decade of change for the Catholic Church. In Latin America, Camilo Torres had begun to write about revolution and political upheaval changing the way the world viewed politics and religion. Communism had affected not only Latin America, but also Europe. Pope John XXIII and the bishops began to fear the chaos that could come with massive political change. The Pope began to write messages that were openly political asking the governments of the world to recognize the change that was occurring among the people. In these documents he expresses the need for progressive social change. It is during Pope John XXIII's period in power that Vatican II started the drastic changes made in the Catholic Church.

The end of Vatican II and the CELAM meeting in Medellín called for changes in the Catholic Church in Latin America. In Colombia the changes were met with excitement from the priests and laity. However, the hierarchy of the Catholic Church did not view the changes in the same light. The Catholic Church's hierarchy in Colombia wanted to make order out of chaos in the country by promoting organization which they believed would keep the people safe (Palacios 2006, 180). In a country where civil conflict has taken center stage for over forty years the church values peace more than social equality.

Camilo Torres

Camilo Torres Restrepo was born in Bogota, Colombia on February 3, 1929. In the early stages of his priesthood, Torres was willing to accept the discipline of the Catholic Church, but as his work and studies progressed he found it more difficult to be part of the Catholic Church. Torres first started his career as a priest as the chaplain at the National University in Bogotá, Colombia (Drekonja 1971, 59). His liberal ideas fit in well with the school that is highly

respected and which has a clear liberal orientation. Torres felt that the Catholic Church in Colombia was afforded too many privileges and did not share its wealth with the people. The rebel priest did not see a conflict between his Catholic faith and his Marxist beliefs. “According to Camilo violent revolution in Latin America is probable. Christians should take part in it: they should enter coalitions with the Marxists...for the love of the Christians will overcome the hate of the Marxists” (Drekonja 1971, 59). Currently, there is a bust of Torres at the university and on the walls are spray-painted quotations attributed to Torres.

Torres wanted to see progressive social change in Latin America. In the early stages of his career he believed social change could be made through the Catholic Church. Torres said “[he] would follow the directions of the Pontiffs of the Church any day rather than those of the pontiffs of our ruling class” (Garcia and Calle 1968, 510). Torres was educated in Europe at the Louvain where he studied sociology. It was during his time at the Louvain and through his studies that Torres began to realize the great class inequalities that plagued Colombia (Drekonja 1971, 59). “Camilo Torres came to believe that as a Christian he was obliged to be political and to promote revolutionary change. His argument for political action rested on making the “Christian obligation to [be charitable and to love your] neighbor effective” (Levine 1977, 232). Whereas the Catholic hierarchy wanted to step back from politics, Torres wanted to enter politics, but on the side of the masses living in poverty. The Catholic Church was threatened by Torres’ political actions. His beliefs were extreme for the Catholic hierarchy. “Camilo began to understand that the traditional elite of Colombia, despite its intellectual brilliance, was not capable of comprehending the social question” (Drekonja 1971, 59). Camilo Torres was looking for a peaceful revolution along the same lines of the Christian Democrats in Chile. This idea was threatening not only to the hierarchy of the church, but also to the Colombian politicians.

Camilo Torres traveled throughout Colombia promoting his political agenda in the early 1960s. In 1964, a political movement emerged with the name of the Frente Unido. Frente Unido was a radical political organization that Torres helped develop. Through the organization's journal and political platform, Torres was able to express his liberal ideas for Colombia. The organization "experienced phenomenal growth within months and shook the power structure of Colombia" (Drekonja 1971, 59). Frente Unido suffered a major blow when Cardinal Concha defrocked Torres. After Torres' defrocking he decided to join the ELN. Torres left his peaceful ideals with the priesthood and became the head chaplain for the ELN as well as a guerrilla fighter. Torres believed that "All patriotic Colombians must be ready for war... What is important is that the revolution find us ready at all times" (Garcia and Calle 1968, 127). He would die soon after in a military struggle in 1966 fighting for the ELN (Levine 1977 234-235).

Golconda and SAL

Camilo Torres was not the only example of radicalization inside the Catholic Church in Colombia. The Grupo de Golconda was also formed there. The radical priests who organized this movement took a liberal interpretation of the CELAM meeting in Medellín. In 1968, fifty priests met on a farm in Viota, Cundinamarca. The group drew on the writings of the CELAM meeting in Medellín to form their own doctrine. They wanted radical social reform in Colombia and felt that the hierarchy was moving too slowly (Schoultz 1973, 247). As Daniel Levine states in "Continuities and Change," the Catholic Church in Colombia is slow moving and has close ties to a conservative Vatican in Rome. The Golconda group wanted immediate social action. The group was looking for the organization of the peasants. In other regions of Latin America this social action was also taking place. Christian base communities (CEBs) were being formed in Brazil and in Central America. Golconda wanted the same for Colombia.

From the beginning the Golconda group faced organizational problems. The original members held different views of their mission. Liberal members of the organization demanded revolution; while the more conservative members called for a strict adherence to the Medellín documents (Schoultz 1973, 247). Because of their radical leadership in Golconda, the members faced a harsh reaction from the Catholic hierarchy in Colombia. The hierarchy closely watched many Colombian priests who were members. Four of their Spanish members were expelled from the country (Schoultz 1973, 247). The ultimate blow to the organization occurred when two of its leaders were killed in separate plane crashes. It was a continuous uphill battle with the hierarchy of the Catholic Church and without a united front it was impossible for the Golconda group to produce more than just a document calling for change (Schoultz 248).

A second movement of radical clergy was the Priests for Latin America (SAL). SAL was formed at the same time as the Golconda group and had the same goals. Like Golconda and Camilo Torres, SAL promoted social justice and drastic change of the Catholic Church (Levine 1992, 82). SAL, however, suffered the same fate that Golconda met. The Golconda group was too radical to make any real progress. The group also had the same problem they faulted the Catholic Church with. SAL was a top down organization and was formed much like the Catholic hierarchy with the governing priests at the top and the peasants at the bottom. There was little connection between the governing priests of SAL and those they were trying to help. SAL was a top down organization and though they preached social justice there was no mass movement to participate in communal activities. Many of the members of SAL left the priesthood in the late 1960s and found other alternatives. Some members of SAL and Golconda joined the ELN while others worked to serve social causes in different ways. “Urban Colombia is now littered with small foundations, bookstores, and the like run by clerics who left the priesthood...” (Levine

1992, 83). Because of the failures of SAL and Golconda, social organizations that work through the Catholic Church must be cautious. These two organizations of priests had strongly worded documents but did little to deliver on their ideas.

The Jesuits and Colombia

Some of the most highly respected religious orders inside the Catholic Church have also been seen as threats to the Roman hierarchy. The Jesuit order places importance on education and social justice. Recently, because of their active work in social development and their liberal style of education, Jesuits have been removed from positions of power inside the Catholic Church. The Catholic hierarchy has removed members of the Jesuit order from positions of power in the office of education and social justice (Levine 1985, 308). Unlike grassroots organizations, the Jesuits have more freedom to conduct their work because they have legitimacy through their order. The Jesuits have been in Colombia since Colombia's independence from Spain. They also have funding through their order and are able to have some autonomy. With help from the Jesuit order worldwide, these priests are able to run programs without the consent of the hierarchy of the Catholic Church in Colombia.

The Jesuits have been a part of Colombia since the Spanish colonized the country. The first role that the order dominated was the mass conversion of the indigenous people in the country. Next came the conversion of the slaves who later entered Colombia via slave ships and became a large industry for Colombia during the colonial period. The order is known as educators and missionaries and they have fulfilled that role in Colombia. The Jesuits are known not only for their prestigious schools but also for their education of the masses living in poverty. The Jesuits host radio shows for educational purposes that are broadcast throughout the country. They also helped to organize some of the oldest and largest trade unions in Colombia. Because of their prominent position throughout the country and in the poorer communities, the Jesuits

have faced criticism from the hierarchy of the Catholic Church in Colombia. Much of their power has been striped away from them, but they do have the luxury of autonomy because they have a respected and old relationship with the people in Colombia. The Jesuits also have autonomy when it comes to their teaching styles. The schools and universities that fall under the Jesuit order are still controlled by Jesuit priests.

The Catholic Church in Colombia has a stronghold on education. The three main male Catholic orders in the country are the Christian Brothers, the Jesuits and the Salesians. Though all the orders, male and female, contribute to the education system, the Jesuits are known worldwide for their contributions to education, and in Colombia this is no exception.

In practice Church control over education is even greater than its official powers would suggest. With more than 3,000 schools and 275,000 pupils, the Catholic educational system in Colombia is the strongest and Largest in Latin America. It is estimated that 25% of primary, 75-80% of secondary and 30% of university enrolment is in Catholic institutions. Three Church institutions of higher education-Colgeio del Rosario and Universidad Javeriana in Bogotá and the Universidad Bolivariana in Medellín- are among the most highly respected in the nation. (Schoultz 1973, 240-241)

The Jesuits have been in Colombia since the establishment of the nation. They have traveled throughout the country working on education, evangelization, and social justice. During the colonial period the Jesuits were based in Cartagena and focused on educating and converting the slaves. The most famous of the Jesuits was Saint Peter Claver who worked until his death to make sure that the slaves who arrived in Colombia were fed, clothed and treated as fairly as possible. Because of the Jesuits' vocal nature, they were expelled several times from Colombia, but always were allowed back in. Before their first expulsion the Jesuits founded La Pontificia Javeriana. The school was shut down after the first expulsion, but reopened several years later when the political order changed and they were allowed re-entry.

Two of the key tenets of the Order of Jesuits are education and social justice. The Jesuit University in Bogotá is vocal in promoting the idea of social justice to their students. The school

is run by the Jesuits and has grown into one of the most important universities in the country. Because of the prestige that is attached to going to Javeriana, many wealthier families enroll their children in the university. The Jesuits in return demand that each student conduct community service. According to *Espiritu de Servicio-Jesuitas Colombia*, the university is there to serve the community. In the book's fourth chapter the Jesuits write that one student who enters Javeriana represents 100 Colombians who do not have the financial ability to attend any university. They demand that the students recognize it is a privilege to attend school. At the university and when they have completed university they should complete community service and help those Colombians who live in poverty (Jesuits 1965, chapter 4). To help promote the idea of service, all medical students are expected to volunteer in the school clinic. The clinic serves all people who go for treatment, no matter their social standing.

Service is an important tenet in Jesuit living. The Jesuits do not just dominate the education system. The Jesuits started the first trade unions established in Colombia. "As early as the 1840's the Jesuits had established a series of *Congregaciones de Obreros* to act as economic and political pressure groups" (Schoultz 1973, 242). The clergy started the first official trade union in 1909. Because of their liberal ideas the Jesuits are at times considered a threat to the Catholic Church, yet they are also prominent in Colombia. The church acknowledges the presence and the help the Jesuits have contributed. "In 1946 the *Unión de Trabajadores de Colombia* (UTC) was formed by the Reverend Vicente Andrade Valderrama, S.J., and other Jesuits in an attempt by the Colombian Church to counteract the growing influence of communism among the working class"(Schoultz 1973, 242). The Jesuits have also supported the organization of agrarian workers.

Sadly, the hierarchy of the Catholic Church has lost confidence in the Jesuits because of ideological and generational differences between the Jesuit order and the leaders of the church. “Management of groups and training programs were taken away from the Jesuits and given to a new department of the Bishops’ Conference” (Levine 1985, 308). The Jesuits have not lost the respect of the people in Colombia. Their schools are still strongly funded by the people and their religious order. They are considered too liberal by the hierarchy of the church but they have the legitimacy of their past history in the country to continue their work.

Catholic Based Non-Profit Organizations

The Catholic Church has retreated behind its Church walls. This does not mean that Catholics in Colombia are not trying to promote needed social development. Both the liberal and conservative groups have grown up and out from Catholic doctrine in order to help with the country’s poor. Groups such as CINEP are considered liberal because most of their writings focus on breaking the class divide and supplying the needed infrastructure for those living below the poverty line or in rural areas. On the conservative side, through its connections to the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, are organizations such as El Minuto de Dios started out as a short prayer service on Colombian radio. The group has grown and helps those living in poverty with loans and low-income housing. These programs demand that the recipients do not receive free handouts. They must work to help develop the community and work for their rent. Each organization has grown out of what they think are the most important tenets of the Catholic faith. The more conservative groups have been met with far less hostility than the liberal groups because they do not question the hieratical system that is in place not only in the Catholic Church but also in Colombian society.

Through education about social development and social justice work organizations can make people more aware. One successful organization in raising social awareness in Colombia

has been CINEP. Jesuits priests started the group in 1972, in order to raise awareness of the humanitarian violations caused by both the guerrillas and the government. The group looks to “construct a more humane and equitable society through the promotion of comprehensive and sustainable development” (CINEP 2007, cinep.org). CINEP works on development projects throughout Colombia and also conducts research on development in the country. They have ties to other non-profit organizations both in Colombia and around the world. “During the 1970’s the focus of CINEP’s research and action was on developing information with the community” (Gamboa and Zackrison 2001, 95). CINEP seeks to connect with the people. They want to help create an infrastructure and teach those living below the poverty line how to survive. “...The idea became developing information to be read with the community...a resurgence of interest in themes dealing with public finance, Keynesianism, and a more ‘heterodox’ Marxism that provided for a more realistic scrutiny of capitalist crises”(Gamboa and Zackrison 2001, 95). The work that is conducted by CINEP involves critiquing and working with the government. This relationship has been opposed by the Catholic Church that wishes to stay out of the political arena.

Organizations such as CINEP gain the trust of the people because of their ties to the Church. Many of CINEP’s leaders are Jesuit priests who are working to educate and aid the people. CINEP also has a journal called *Solidaridad*. Both organizations have been outspoken about situations facing Colombians. Because of their views and their willingness to include the Catholic Church as part of the problem, the organization has faced conflict with the church. Part of the repercussions was the forced replacement of several CINEP leaders by priests who were more conservative. The Jesuit led group does not have total autonomy from the hierarchy of the Catholic Church and therefore must follow certain guidelines.

One of the most important documents that CINEP has created since 1987 documents the amount of political violence that occurs in Colombia. CINEP was aware that the judicial system in Colombia is flawed and because of bribery and lack of security justice is rarely served. Because of the lack of political or judicial support for victims of violence, CINEP worked to help the people and gain recognition of the crimes. The database documents disappearances of people, torture, and other acts that have occurred during the conflict that has raged in the country since the 1940's. "Over time, though, the organization broadened its survey not only to track the broad spectrum of political violence, but also to adapt to the constantly changing cast to violent groups"(Howe 2004, 2). CINEP's research adapts to the new forms of violence and groups that may participate in the war, for example they acknowledge the inception of the paramilitaries. The first few years were spent documenting what they call Colombia's "dirty war" which focused on exterminating leftist groups in the country and they received support from the Colombian military (Howe 2004, 2).

CINEP's programs are not based just on research. The group also takes a hands on approach to social development in Colombia. According to CINEP's website:

In order for this to be done, our work is undertaken through the following four complementary lines of action: regional analysis and participation (with projects directly involving local communities), national analysis and participation (incorporating research concerned with structural issues of national interest), a peace program (which attempts to bring about conditions that forge a culture for peace), and administrative and financial management (which allows for the operational management of the institution's different program and projects) (CINEP 2007, cinep.org).

CINEP works to organize people in different regions of Colombia and gain their trust. The trust that CINEP builds is not only for their organization or the Catholic Church but also for the government and economy. With their Peace Program initiative CINEP volunteers have been working with displaced Colombians on the coast of the country. In this region they set up

workshops on mobilizing civilian initiatives in the peace process. CINEP also hosts radio shows and has established post baccalaureate programs.

The organization stresses work on the regional level, recognizing that each region of Colombia has suffered a different fate due to the ongoing civil conflict in the country. By acknowledging that no region is the same, they can see what is needed and how they can help. According to their website their regional analysis includes seven steps which are:

1. Creating long-term regional commitments, and coordinating short- and medium-term programs and projects, in order to contribute to the construction of regional development and peace alternatives in the midst of the present social and armed conflict in Colombia.
2. Constructing inclusive alternatives, agreed upon by the actors in the local and regional development, which implies strengthening and appropriating the regional processes, organizations and institutions.
3. Preparing and consolidating regional settings in order to re-construct the social fabric heading into a post-conflict period.
4. Identifying regional needs, as well as analyzing the relevance and sustainability of CINEP's work in the different regions. In this sense, strategic alliances must be created with local, regional, national and international actors in order to strengthen the processes undertaken in the regions.
5. Creating and participating in political debate, and in advocacy work, as a part of regional, national and international networks dedicated to development and peace.
6. Carrying out the applicable research for regional processes by maintaining a national and global perspective that lets regional analysis be updated in relation to the national context, as well as for research to be carried out on the theoretical evolution of concepts, which helps in understanding the regional social construction.
7. Formulating and carrying out fund-raising projects in order to facilitate the financial sustainability of the regional processes. (CINEP 2007, cinep.org)

From the 1970's until the present CINEP has continued to grow. They are one of the most respected organizations in Colombia. With their growth they have also taken a more hands on approach to social development in the country.

The leaders of the Catholic Church in Colombia have always sided with the rich and those in government. The rare exceptions began to emerge in the 1960's with the opening of Vatican II, the Conference of Catholic Bishops in Medellín and the development of Liberation Theology. Priests and other religious leaders began work with those living in poverty and they began to teach that there was a possibility for a better life. CINEP has met harsh criticisms from the hierarchy of the Catholic Church. The organization is considered Marxist and too political for many of the Colombian Bishops.

They challenge the bishops on all fronts, giving particular weight to four elements: class unity as the basis of popular religious organization; the utility of Marxist analysis; the need for new structures of authority in Church and society; the primary role of political action in religious organization and commitment. (Levine 1985, 312)

CINEP, however, refuses to take any sides in the war or politics of the country. They believe by choosing a side they bring their legitimacy into question and will not succumb even if it threatens their ties to the Church. CINEP's main concern is gaining recognition for the problems that face Colombians.

The violence that still prevails in the country also affects the citizens. CINEP seeks viable forms of sustainable development throughout Colombia. The creation of more infrastructure and more social development in order to help the people is the main concern. But CINEP realizes that a major part of development is peace. Of the organization's value system, accepting diversity and acting transparently ranks among their top goals. CINEP acknowledges the problems that the people and the need for trust as well as unity. CINEP has also been victimized by the war in Colombia, losing two of its investigators when they were murdered by paramilitaries. "It is of the utmost importance that we not take sides...all the warring parties are guilty of human rights abuses" (Howe 2004, 2). Though all participants in the conflict have threatened CINEP they still possess, "the most influential database of human-rights violations"

which is used by the US State department and other countries and, “it determines, in a large part, the way the war is perceived internally and abroad” (Howe 2004, 2).

The journal *Solidaridad*, published by CINEP, is vocal in its distrust and dislike for the policies of the hierarchy of the Catholic Church. According to one issue an anonymous author states that the bishops’ form of CEBS “amounts to evasion of the real problems,” if true base communities are formed (according to the author) real goals of elevating poverty can be accomplished (Levine 1985, 312). The anonymous authors of *Solidaridad* are much more vocal than the members of CINEP. The authors have the ability to voice their distrust of the hierarchy of the Catholic Church anonymously and make public the problems they see inside the church structure. One author states that the church should fear losing Catholics because “a hierarchy which doggedly turns its back on the people, in the long run creates a people which turns its back on the hierarchy”(Levine 1985, 312).

The writers and members of CINEP and *Solidaridad* are not looking for a break with the Catholic Church nor are they demanding a drastic restructuring of the church. They wish for support and understanding and a reworking of important themes. “Leaders and activists alike fear being forced out of the Church, and thereby losing the cover of its moral authority and the symbolic legitimacy membership provides” (Levine 1985, 313). Priests and lay workers often have to work secretly to build base communities and often in fear of the church hierarchy. The only way the laity gains support from the hierarchy is if they are taught and follow the strict instruction laid out by the local bishops. Priests, nuns and brothers are expected to follow the same criteria. Trade unions and other organizations started by priests in the early 1960’s have chosen to part ways with the church in order to be able to gain autonomy (Levine 1985, 308).

The members of CINEP and other Catholic organizations fear the repercussions of speaking too critically of the Catholic Church. Those who are too vocal are often silenced or forced out of the Church. Many of these organizations, according to Levine, feel that they need the legitimacy that the Catholic Church affords them (Levine 1985, 313). A major issue that Palacios points out in his book is distrust. The rural peasants have felt the affects of violence and have seen its forms in both government and religion. Many of the people who live at “the bottom” do not know whom to trust. To them organizations such as CINEP could lead to more violence, which does not alleviate their poverty. Palacios also points out the time constraints that the poor have to face. Being a member of a CEB takes time, which many of these people do not have. When putting food on the table is a struggle in itself, it is hard to convince people to make changes (Palacios 2006, 181).

Catholic Charismatic Renewal - Working within the Boundaries of the Catholic Hierarchy

The Catholic Charismatic Renewal

“‘Renew Your wonders in our time, as though for a new Pentecost,’ Pope John XXIII prayed in *Humanae Salutis* and that is how it all started” (Hitchcock and Berdnarski 1980, 52). With the teachings of John XXIII and the Second Vatican Council, new forms of Catholic worship began. The pope and the bishops promoted the spread of Catholicism among the people and though the importance of the hierarchy remained in tact, prayer groups and community spirituality were promoted. In January 1967 a theology instructor from Duquesne University attended a Pentecostal prayer meeting at the home of a Presbyterian. The communal spirituality he felt at the meeting carried over at a retreat held by his university a few weeks later. The style of the Pentecostal prayer meeting took hold in his methodology of Catholic teaching and began to spread from Duquesne to the University of Notre Dame (Hitchcock and Berdanarski 1980, 52-53). Though the Catholic Church initially met the group with some hesitation, their adherence to

Catholic doctrine helped to gain their acceptance by Pope Paul VI. Once the Vatican gave its approval of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, it began to spread rapidly throughout the Catholic Church (Hitchcock and Berdanarski 1980, 55).

The Catholic Charismatic movement in Latin America tries to join the spiritual side of Christianity to the side that is socially committed to the problems that face Christians worldwide (Suenens and Camara 1979, 22). The Charismatic Catholics are trying to connect the spirituality of Catholicism with the social teachings of Vatican II. They feel that they must let Jesus live through them, not only connecting to the Holy Spirit, but also being an active Christian (Suenens and Camara 1979, 25). “No Christian can live in a vacuum, a private world of his own. Every baptized person must accept responsibility for the social consequences of his Christian way of life” (Suenens and Camara 1979, 29). The movement calls Catholics to act as directed by *Gaudium et Spes*. It tells practitioners that it is their duty as Christians to act and in their every day lives they should strive to make a difference. The Charismatic Catholics, however, do not threaten the hierarchy of the Church because they hold true to Catholic doctrine. They say that they are trying to emulate Christ and his teachings. The Catholic Church still is at the center of their activities and still has control.

Catholic movements, such as the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, have had more success working within the church structure. Because the movement is based on Catholic teaching and is conservative in their rhetoric they have received the approval of the bishops in Colombia and at the Vatican. Even though the Charismatic Renewal is centered in religious education they also run programs in social development. The group El Minuto de Dios, which falls under the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, helps fund small business loans. The group has also created its

own community in the suburbs of Bogotá. This barrio is specifically for those who are living below the poverty line (Martin 1976, 135).

El Minuto de Dios

A group which is part of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal is El Minuto de Dios. Following the lines of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, people began to look for ways to evangelize. Though the main issue was the spread of Catholicism, many felt that part of that commitment included giving every person the chance for a better life. In 1956, Father Rafael García-Herreros started El Minuto de Dios. Father García-Herreros would appear on television for one minute with a family that was in need; his program was called El Minuto de Dios. He hoped that the people watching television would feel compelled to give back to those in need. As people began to respond to his one-minute television show, Father Garcia looked for other ways to expand his project. Because of the shows moderate success Father Garcia wanted to expand his project to help more people (Martin 1976, 135).

Father Garcia decided to start a barrio, “based on Christian principles, where poor families would live in dignity” (Martin 1976, 135). The barrio was placed on the outskirts of Bogotá. With no support from his Eudist⁴ community, the priest built the first house in the barrio on his own. He then moved a poor family into the house and taught them how to cook, sew and clean. He wanted them to be able to subsist on their own. When other people in poverty expressed interest in the program, he used funds accrued from his television program to build new houses. The prospective members of the community were also expected to contribute in any way they could. Some helped with the building of houses while others helped with clean up

⁴ The Eudist priests are an order that was founded by St. John Eudes in Caen, France. Though the Eudist priests focus on the education of men in seminary they also promote evangelization and missionary work. (Wallace 1948, 303).

(Martin 1976, 136). "...Now Fr. García has been joined by top-notch experts in sociology and psychology, and by architects, engineers, lawyers, and accountants" (Martin 1976, 136).

According to the Minuto de Dios website in 2004, the community had over 50,000 residents and was starting other projects outside their community.

The organizational members of El Minuto de Dios have laid out criteria that must be followed to become a member of the barrio. "In order to live in the barrio, a family must first of all be in desperate need. Secondly, they must be willing to cooperate with their neighbors... Thirdly, a family must be willing to improve their lives physically, intellectually and morally" (Martin 1976, 137). The barrio has neighborhood rules that all members must follow. They must contribute one Saturday a month to community service projects, if they are alcoholics they must join Alcoholics Anonymous and they must keep their house up to standard (Martin 1976, 137). The houses that the families live in are rented to them, once they have paid rent for five years and follow the rules of the barrio they become owners of the house. There is also the possibility of upgrading homes for those families who are considered upstanding members of the community (Martin 1976, 138).

Fr. García has created a community that can stand on its own. Through El Minuto de Dios, Fr. García has created a Christian Base Community (CEB). The members of the barrio meet weekly to discuss issues in the community and safety. Fr. García wanted the community to be able to run without him. The community has established a democratic system and elects officials at their meetings (Martin 1976, 138). By giving the members of the barrio responsibility over their community, Fr. García is teaching them leadership skills. The members of the community are also forced to rely on themselves and each other instead of Fr. Garcia.

Religion is at the core of the El Minuto de Dios community. Before there was a church in the barrio Fr García would say mass in the streets. Fr García took these ideals from John XXIII and Vatican II and made a community that is still growing. When Fr García first started building his ideal community it was not supported by many. His order was not willing to fund it and the Communists did not like a utopia being built outside their guidelines. The conservatives also felt that the program was too liberal. There were several attempts on Fr Garcia's life, but in the end, the benefits of the community quieted the naysayers. "Members of El Minuto de Dios are seeking a lifestyle that overcomes the injustice built into both Capitalism and Communism. 'El Minuto de Dios is not seeking richness, but just that people have enough,' says Fr García" (Martin 1976, 144).

Working Outside the Church Walls

Organization and activism is hard in Colombia. Social progression is feared by both the government and the guerrillas. Ending the long standing war in Colombia is at the top of the national agenda and the Catholic Church's agenda. The Catholic Church speaks out against the war and has formed small scale CEBs. The problem with the Catholic Church's organization, however, is that they do not promote self-sufficiency. Reliance on the church and adoration of the church is important in protecting the supremacy of the Catholic Church.

A re-education must occur. For some it is just receiving an education for the first time. By teaching the people in Colombia who have been displaced by the war or have not had the opportunities afforded to the middle and upper classes self sufficiency is possible. The radical priests of the 1960s called for revolution but could not organize themselves. Camilo Torres joined a rebel group in order to accomplish his beliefs, which never came to fruition. The actions of grassroots organizations have been the most successful. The education of the Jesuits, CINEP,

and El Minuto de Dios have done the most to support the people who seem to be forgotten by the government.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

The main goal of my thesis was to see what the Catholic Church was doing in Colombia to aid social development. Though the church is slow moving there have been initiatives to aid those living in poverty. Mainly, though, the church's hierarchy is more talk than action. The main concerns of the country revolve around the illegal drug trade and ending the ongoing civil conflict. Yet if poverty is to be alleviated and people given another viable option they may stop farming illegal drugs or participating in the violence. CINEP aims for reconciliation and peace in their community projects. As seen in my thesis these organizations and their programs are an obvious threat to the guerrillas because they give people another option and a chance at life that does not include living in fear. CINEP and El Minuto de Dios have both been targeted by the guerrillas because of their peaceful initiatives.

Other Catholic charities have also entered the country, but there must be more effort on the part of the Catholic Church. Through my research I have found that the Catholic Church in Colombia is not proactive. They embrace the current Pope's conservative agenda. They talk a good game but the action is done by others outside the hierarchy. What I found most important is that recently the Catholic Church is becoming more vocal. They have begun to issue statements on the civil conflict and on the peace initiative. They are willing to work with both the guerrillas and the government in order to end the civil conflict. This is a good first step for the church. They are reentering society albeit tentatively. Other programs such as CINEP and El Minuto de Dios continue to grow and foreign branches of Catholic Charities are becoming active in the country, such as Catholic Relief Services and Caritas International. In the end, these findings are hopeful that initiative is being taken, but also fearful that the hierarchy of the church is not fully involved.

Colombian Catholicism is an intricate mix of conservative action with progressive dialogue. The Catholic Church in Colombia has tried to stay true to its conservative roots while facing a dangerous situation in Colombia. The politics of Colombia are violent; the people have little or no trust in the government, and the poverty rate is increasing. The role of the Catholic Church has always been to provide spiritual guidance for the practitioners. In 2007 spiritual guidance is not enough. The Church has released a series of statements since the 1960s voicing their concern about the lack of social progress in Colombia. The role of social development, however, has been left up to organizations with tenuous ties to the conservative hierarchy of the church. Yes, the Catholic Church has helped in short-term social development, but it has not been long-term. Programs run by CINEP and El Minuto de Dios educate the people to be self-sufficient.

Colombia Today

In 2007 Colombia faces many of the same issues that have plagued the country for over forty years. The country is a haven for drug dealers, guerrillas and paramilitaries. Safety is a major issue for anyone who wishes to visit the country. Tourism could be a major revenue booster but, until tourists can be guaranteed their safety, foreign countries warn against travel to Colombia.

The lack of opportunity to accrue wealth only leads to a higher involvement in illegal activities. The current president is the first two-term president in the constitutional history of Colombia. Alvaro Uribe, Colombia's President, won both elections based on a hard-line stance against the guerrillas. He has promoted the destruction of all coca fields and has issued swift punishment to members of the drug trade and guerrilla movements. The Catholic Church has supported the destruction of the coca fields and the end to the civil conflict that has affected the lives of all Colombians.

According to the Amnesty International Report for 2006, human rights abuses are at high levels (Amnesty International 2007, thereport.amnesty.org). Though the government claims that over 300 paramilitaries have been demobilized, many of the same fighters have regrouped to form criminal gangs. More than 80 mass graves were found at the beginning of the year and more than 770 civilians were killed or forcibly disappeared in 2006 (Amnesty International 2007, thereport.amnesty.org). The government has issued plans to protect the citizens and seek other opportunities for work. The programs, however, are flawed according to the Amnesty report (Amnesty International 2007, thereport.amnesty.org). The US has funneled over 200 million dollars into Colombia but most of the money was funding for the police and military. The US government is now in the process of re-working its aid bill for Colombia. The fear of losing extensive US aid has caused Colombia to spend over 100,000 US dollars to lobby US Democrats to continue funding Colombian trade agreements (Goodman 2007, 2).

Women have been the violent target of the military, paramilitaries and guerrillas. The military has been reprimanded for violence against people both inside and outside their ranks. There is no “clean” party in Colombia. The guerrillas, paramilitaries and government have all been involved in illegal dealings. The lack of trust has made it difficult to end the civil conflict. The Catholic Church has had to step in and house freed guerrilla fighters to guarantee their safety so the government does not lose them.

According to the Catholic News Agency, the role of the Catholic Church has grown since the beginning of 2000. The church has held guerrilla fighters, who were released from prison to ensure their safety and participation in the peace talks. The church has also tried to open gateways for peace talks and work as the mediator. The protection of Catholic workers, however, is not always guaranteed. Those who do not want peace in Colombia have threatened bishops,

priests and lay members of the church (Catholic News Agency 2005, catholicnewagency.com). The lack of safety in Colombia has made it hard for international groups to work on humanitarian projects. Guerilla fighters who were against the peace initiative killed members of CINEP in their own apartments. The founding members of El Minuto de Dios were also threatened because of their desire to help those in need. Because the guerrillas are trying to promote their own form of government they do not want those promoting peaceful social development to win. In the same respect the government does not want to be criticized for its own crimes against humanity and refuses to protect those who are not supportive of their program.

Though the Catholic Church has tried to stay out of the political arena, it is impossible. The church in 2007 has issued several statements attesting to their support of the peace efforts. The church must also provide safety for humanitarian workers who fall under their protection. According to the Catholic News Agency, the Catholic Church is calling for peace in Colombia. In a February, 2007 article the bishops of Colombia called for an end of conflict. The church also acknowledges that it is the job of both the guerrillas and the government to end the conflict (Catholic News Agency 2005, catholicnewsagency.com). As recently as May of 2007 the Church stated its views on the deceit and on the war in the country. The Colombian Catholic Church has stated that it will not take part in any peace talks unless the whole truth is revealed. The drug trade, murders, and kidnappings by all parties involved is totally unacceptable to the church (Catholic News Agency 2007, catholicnewsagency.com). The church stated in February, 2007 that they would not remain silent on human rights issues that face Colombia. This is a change from the church in the 1950s, which decided to stay out of politics because of the violence that plagued the country.

For the Catholic Church to enter into the political arena in 2007 is also a drastic change from their role throughout the 1980s and 1990s. The church, however, does not wish to participate in any large-scale initiatives. Instead, they want to voice their opinion on the issues. Their voice is strong in Colombia and by showing that they are on the side of the people they can keep the trust of the people. The Colombian government has long faced the claims that they, along with the guerrillas, have broken human rights laws.

Final Thoughts

Colombia is still looking for a peaceful solution to their social conflict, but if politicians continue to participate in the violence there will be no trust on the part of the citizens. The lack of political openness in the country has contributed to the current state of war. The people of Colombia have been caught in the crossfire of the civil conflict. When looking for help with development the people do not turn to the government because they have rarely helped. Religion seems like the next logical option. The Catholic Church is the largest and strongest religious group inside Colombia.

This thesis investigated what the Catholic Church had done to help in Colombia's social development by exploring the relationship between the Catholic Church and the government of Colombia. The findings were that this relationship was a hindrance to Catholic social development. It was not until the Church retreated from the political conflict that they were able to commit to social progress. Vatican II and the CELAM meeting at Medellín promoted social change. The Colombian Catholic hierarchy was slow to make these changes. But, from the 1960s until the 1980s the Church did form CEBs throughout dioceses in Colombia. These programs looked to help Colombians living in poverty. The error of the Church was refusing to educate the people on how to be self sufficient.

When the Catholic Church became afraid of political repercussions which might come with that social development they retreated behind church walls. The void in social development was filled by Catholic organizations with tenuous ties to the Catholic hierarchy. This thesis also explored the relationship with organizations that fell under the umbrella of the protection of the Catholic Church. Though certain organizations such as CINEP have been considered too radical they are still able to promote their social development programs. El Minuto de Dios takes a more conservative approach to social development in Colombia and has a stronger relationship with the Catholic hierarchy. The major problem that both these organizations have faced is violence from outside groups. In Colombia, rebels have violently threatened the church and these organizations because they promote peaceful solutions. The final result is the Catholic Church has promoted social development, but on their own schedule and much too slowly. Without the guarantee of safety from the government it is hard for priests, nuns and lay members to enter regions of the country that are most highly affected by the war. As a result the overall progress of social development in Colombia has been slow.

Future Research

With the government's lack of interest in the people, it has fallen to the religious organizations and humanitarian workers to work on social development. Future research on Colombia's social development could include the Protestants. Future research could be done on what other aspects of social development the Protestants promote. Have they formed new communities and do Colombians welcome them? It would also be important to see if different Protestants work together or would even work with the Catholic Church on social development plans.

Another issue to research would be international organizations that enter Colombia to assist. Much of the European funding that enters Colombia is through non-profit organizations

and grassroots movements. Though their safety is always a major issue, a topic that could be researched is how “hands on” the European Union is and how their money is used. One group that does receive money from foreign organizations is CINEP. Another research project could be done solely on CINEP and their development projects throughout the country. CINEP has offices on the coast and in the interior where field research could be done on site. Safety would be a concern, but it is possible to see their education initiatives in action. Field research could also be done on the Catholic Charismatic Renewal and El Minuto de Dios. Since the community of El Minuto de Dios is continually growing, field research could be done in Bogotá to track their progress.

Conclusion

The future of social development in Colombia is still to be determined. Many members of the political parties who run the country are facing criminal charges because of illegal activities that include perjury, drug trafficking, and involvement in violence. The recent crack down on the government has also affected the president and his cabinet. No one is left blameless in Colombia. The Catholic Church has tried to stay out of the political arena, but in the end she has had to enter the peace talks between guerrillas and the government. While the Catholic Church mediates between warring factions in the country other organizations have had to enter in to take care of the poverty and humanitarian aid. Groups such as CINEP and El Minuto de Dios have worked to educate the Colombians living below the poverty line on how to subsist on their own. Both groups’ long-term goals include the breaking down of the age-old class structure. They work on projects that teach people how to farm, read and protect themselves.

The objective of this paper was to look at the role of the Catholic Church in the social development of Colombia. The original thesis was that the Catholic Church did not play a significant role in social development and that the Catholic hierarchy of Colombia was a

hindrance to development. It was seen that though the Catholic Church did not play a major role in social development there were moments where initiatives were formed to help Catholics living below the poverty line. Specifically, after Vatican II dioceses throughout Colombia formed CEBs to help alleviate the strain of civil conflict and poverty. The radical Catholic priests did not get the revolution that they had hoped for, but Catholics in Colombia did try to change the situation for the better. The Catholic Church has always recognized that poverty was an issue to be dealt with in Colombia yet the actions of the Church have been slow, hindered by popes fearful of chaos. Hands-on social development in Colombia is conducted by the Catholic Church's practitioners, to be read as priests, nuns and laity financially backed by their own religious orders or outside Catholic organizations, not by the native Colombian Catholic hierarchy.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Jessica Joy Gonzalez was born in Los Angeles, California in 1982. The first three years of her life, however, were spent in Tokyo, Japan before moving to Florida. After 7 years in Miami, she moved to Orlando where her parents currently reside. Jessica traveled extensively as a child. Her many trips included most of Europe, South America, Africa and Asia. Because of her desire to see and understand the world and its myriad cultures Jessica decided to pursue her bachelor's degree in international relations. In 2004 Jessica received her B.A. from Wellesley College with a major in international relations and a minor in religion.

After a gap year which included travels to Brazil and 3 months in Colombia to study Spanish, Jessica decided to pursue her master's degree in Latin American studies with a concentration in religion and society.