The political posture of the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America with specific reference to Colombia and Chile.

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THE POLITICAL POSTURE OF THE
ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN LATIN AMERICA
WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO
COLOMBIA AND CHILE

A Thesis Presented
By
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## CHAPTER

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PREFACE

The simultaneous permanence of an institution throughout centuries and its permeance throughout the society of a continent is certainly a unique political phenomenon. The Roman Catholic Church in Latin America has accomplished this, without question, due in no small part to the religious fervor transplanted and nurtured by the Mother country. Yet, the institutional Church is also a political entity, which in Latin America has been immersed in a turbulent political arena and has demonstrated a remarkable ability, nevertheless, to sustain itself. The mechanism for the propagation of the Church as a vital political force in Latin America is the subject of this dissertation.

In Chapter I, we begin by considering the various frameworks which have been developed by social and political scientists and religious observers for viewing the Catholic Church. These approaches are valuable in that each reveals some aspect of the Church's political posture vis-a-vis Latin American society. Yet these very approaches are limited because they fail to provide a general framework in which one can understand the evolution of the Church as a political institution. It is proposed that such a general framework can be found in the dynamic theme of adaptation of the political Church to the social, economic and political exigencies in Latin America.
The various frameworks outlined in Chapter I are applied in the following two chapters in the form of case studies. We have chosen two countries, Colombia and Chile, where the Catholic Church is examined in an historical context. These two countries differ significantly with regard to their respective Church histories, the relationship of other internal institutions and forces to each Church, and to their experiences in the dynamic world of the twentieth century.

The concluding chapter is a brief summary and a comparative discussion of these two Churches. It is an attempt to view comprehensively the Colombian and Chilean Churches through the perspective of adaptation. Rather than make any broad statements concerning what lies ahead for the Catholic Church in Latin America, we suggest why this institution is unique. In this explanation is embedded the essential elements that will determine the future evolution of the Catholic Church in Latin American society.
CHAPTER I
AN OVERVIEW OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN LATIN AMERICA

Latin American society from the 16th century to the 20th had been supported politically and philosophically by three institutions--the army, the landowners, and the clergy. They had gathered their cohesiveness, their influence, their money and their vitality to shape and direct the destiny of this Spanish colony. Over the span of four centuries, these three so-called "pillars of society" not only guided Latin American communities, but coalesced "to ensure their very own institutional survival and well-being." We might say that in this sense they exhibited political action. Philosophically, they acted as the purveyors of social mores and religious beliefs for the Latin American masses. The institution that reflected both of these political and philosophical dimensions was the clergy.

When we speak of the clergy in Latin America, we are effectively referring to the Roman Catholic Church. To correct any misunderstandings of the term "Church," let us define it as the hierarchical structure of that institution (i.e., cardinals, bishops and other clergy). With regard to Ivan Vallier's notion of elites, let us include in this

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definition those laymen who have exerted an influence on the Catholic system in Latin America. 2

Obviously, "nominal" Catholics have not been taken into account here. Though 90% of Latin Americans today have been baptized in the Catholic faith, and a large proportion of Catholics throughout the world are Latins, too few in Latin America are practicing Catholics. ("... two-thirds of the Catholics there never take first communion and most rarely if ever attend Church.") 3

Until the independence movements of the early 1800's, the place of the Church in Latin American society as a political and as a philosophical or religious institution was firmly secured. However, since the loss of Spanish patronage and attempts by newly independent states to limit Church authority to the religious sphere, "there has been a partial, but continuous liquidation of the political past." Alongside this political upheaval, the Church continued to direct the religious and philosophical beliefs of the people.


3 Adie and Poitras, p. 154.

This particular but general assessment of the Roman Catholic Church up to the early 1900's has found common agreement among political analysts. A reflection of this consensus can be found in the frequent references to Lloyd Mecham's work on Church-State relations for this period.⁵

However, with the arrival of the 20th century, and the waning of the political authority of the Church, we can note the first tremors in the pillars of that institution as a religious body. With the growing emphasis on technology, the introduction of different ideologies, the emergence of new interest groups, the flight of the masses to urban centers, and developments in communication networks and mass media, traditional Latin American society has been shaken to its very core.⁶

Many of these sociological trends have posed a challenge to the Roman Catholic Church. For example, the introduction of new ideologies and religions into Latin America (e.g., Marxism and Protestantism), has brought into question various aspects of the Church's relationship to the masses. As a result of the population shift, the Church hierarchy has begun to examine who it is teaching... and with the concurrent shift toward more relaxed and permissive behavior, what


it is teaching. The Church has felt it necessary to incorporate many of the technological advances, such as the mass media, into its format for disseminating information to the masses.

The Church's reading of these new trends and its subsequent responses, highlights the interrelation of the religious and political dimensions of that institution. For example, with the emergence of marginal interest groups into the apex of the political arena, the hierarchy has had to review its political alignments. With the recent shifts in the makeup of the clerical hierarchy, the Church is subsequently shifting its political leanings.

In short, the Church, like Latin American society, is in a state of flux. We can note this sense of change and ferment in the varied interpretations of political and religious analysts concerning the status of the Church in Latin America today. By no means do we find the consensus that existed among analysts with regard to the pre-20th century Catholic Church. Not only is there debate over who or what is most threatening to the authority of the Church, but disputes have arisen over how well the institution is responding.

The Roman Catholic Church today is being viewed through a variety of perspectives. The political nature of the institution seems to take on a different face, depending on the approach of the viewer or analyst. In an attempt to understand the political posture of the Church, we will survey
a number of the more prominent perspectives. In the end, we will try to present a unifying theme that will reconcile the many faces with the one institution.

An examination of the Catholic Church and subsequent conclusions as to where it is headed, its impact on society, its status compared to other authoritative institutions, etc. are contingent upon the approach or point of reference one takes in the initial study. We can identify six variables or aspects which a number of analysts have used when contemplating the Church in Latin America. These variables take into account many of the singular approaches found in the literature.

A succinct summary and critical analysis of these approaches will be presented in the following pages. The various aspects include: the Church-State approach, Papal-Church relations, the Church's hierarchical structure, new trends in Latin America, the Church's response, and Church adaptation. These aspects are not meant to be mutually exclusive, but rather complementary views of the political role of the Church in Latin America. Consequently, some of the prominent authors have made significant contributions in a number of the aspects which we will consider. These authors will be explicitly mentioned at the beginning of each section. The individual works are cited as they appear in the text.
The Church-State Approach

The Church-State approach, from an historical perspective, is a most appropriate place to begin our study. This aspect provides us with some sense of the Catholic Church through time, as well as its place in Latin American history. Needless to say, this aspect allows us, at the start, to conceptualize an overall picture of the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America. In this analysis we will draw heavily upon the works of Robert Adie and Guy Poitras, Francois Houtart and Emile Pin, and Lloyd Mecham.

The Spanish Crown, just beginning to colonize Latin America at the close of the 15th century, was awarded the right of patronato by the Pope, a right that was conceded in various stages by various Popes.\(^7\) By the end of the reign of Philip II, civil authorities were extending significant control over the Church,\(^8\) for the Spanish Crown had been given the right to collect tythes, to establish new missions, and had asserted control over the entrance into Latin America of papal documents and decrees.\(^9\)

Royal aid and supervision proved beneficial to the religious institution in Latin America. The Church, as a

\(^7\)Mecham, pp. 13-20.
\(^8\)Ibid., p. 20.
\(^9\)Ibid., p. 36.
civilizing agent of the state, became the educator and healer of the Latin American masses, through its schools, hospitals and charitable institutions. Particularly, in the absence of other religious organizations, the Church "had impressed itself upon the minds of the people and had convinced them that only by its ministrations was it possible to secure the blessings of eternal salvation." By advancing the economic interests of the state, the Church acquired some of the best lands in the region.

These assets gave the Church entrance into the elite core of power holders in Latin America during the pre-independence period. The clergy shared the pedestal of power with the conquistadores, capitalists, and colonial administrators. However, this so-called "alliance of the sword and the cross" amounted in the end to an unbalanced partnership. For as long as secular forces controlled Church financing and were involved in Church support, the autonomy of the clergy was severely limited. Such political accommodations were to be severely tested in the early 1800's when dissatisfaction with Spanish control exploded.

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19 Ibid., p. 43.
11 Adie and Poitras, p. 151.
12 Houtart and Pin, p. 7.
13 Adie and Poitras, p. 151.
14 Mecham, p. 40.
During the independence period, the Church was drawn completely into the revolutionary struggle. As a member of the traditional oligarchy, dominant forces of the Church aligned with the conservatives, loyal to Spain. However, a telling number in the lower clergy fought in support of the Revolution. (From a class point of view, many in the top rung of the clerical hierarchy and loyal to the Crown were Spanish born. Correspondingly, a good number acting on the side of the independistas were born in the American continent.)\(^\text{16}\) In addition, those clerics who took part in the independence struggle often did so for reasons other than religious.\(^\text{17}\)

While there was some division within the ranks of the clergy, the Latin American masses remained loyal to the Church throughout this traumatic period. Virtually no opposition was voiced concerning the Church as a religious institution.\(^\text{18}\)

With the assertion of independence from Spain, leaders of the independence movement sought to deprive the Church of those means and privileges which enabled it to exercise political power.\(^\text{19}\) (Many lower clergy aligned themselves with the


\(^{17}\)Mecham, p. 42.

\(^{18}\)Ibid., p. 60.

\(^{19}\)Ibid., p. 417.
independistas with this intent.) Not only was the political dimension of the Church threatened, but there was considerable opposition to its immense wealth and to its influence in non-religious concerns (e.g., its control over education).

The growing trend to curb the political, secular and financial powers of the Church culminated in profound changes in its political and legal status. The first attempt to restrict the Church to the religious sector was realized in Colombia in 1853. From that point in time on, the anticlerical movement permeated throughout Latin America, with rather uneven results. Catholic Churches in Colombia, Argentina and Venezuela, for example, were established as the religion of the state. In other countries, like Brazil, Chile, and Guatemala, the Church became independent from the governing bodies. In some cases, the Church was placed under the rigid control of the state, as in Mexico.

By the beginning of the 20th century, the disestablishment of the Church and State had taken place in most Latin American countries. Up to and including this time, we can note some general trends. Throughout the 19th century, the Church continued to monopolize the religious sphere. However, its political activity and influence had become limited, particularly in light of its "loss of land, wealth, monopoly

\[^{20}\text{Ibid.}, \ p. \ 60.\]

\[^{21}\text{Adie and Poitras, p. 153.}\]
over education, censorship over literature and press, control over hospitals, over public charities, over universities, over marriage, registration of birth, over burial grounds, and over the right to exclude other faiths from the country." \(^{22}\) Finally, yet of primary importance, the Church remained, for the most part, a traditional/oligarchic institution, working with and for conservative forces in Latin America, often to preserve its remaining political and secular interests.

It becomes inaccurate to speak of the Church in Latin America from an historical, Church-State perspective after the early 1900's. With the uneven disentanglement of Church-State relations, we no longer have a monolithic Church. Not only did the anticlerical movement culminate in different rates and various methods of separation within each country, but each state and its respective Church experienced internal and external pressures which had singular and varying effects on each Church. In addition, since it is contemporaneous to our epoch, it becomes difficult to get an accurate historical perspective.

Papal-Church Relations

Though the Church in each country has responded to internal and external pressures in a variety of ways, we can identify certain commonalities among those pressures. This now becomes a convenient stepping-stone to the initiation of an altogether different perspective; the remaining aspects are from the viewpoint of pressures exerted upon the Church, whether they be of an internal or external nature. The next phase of this study will deal with the relationship between the Papacy in Rome and the Catholic Church in Latin America. This interrelationship has been studied by a number of authors, most notably, Guenter Lewy, Karl Schmitt, and Ivan Vallier.

Through bulls, briefs, and other documents, the Pope in Rome has played a significant role in providing direction for the Catholic Church in Latin America. The Papacy, particularly since the latter part of the 19th century, has been influential in steering the Church away from its conservative political tendencies and towards more religious and spiritual involvement.

The Church in Latin America traditionally has been guided by a higher authority, if not the Pope, then a surrogate. When the Pope gave the Spanish Crown the right of patronage in Latin America early in the 16th century, he effectively relinquished much of his influence over the Church. We can see how the Church, under the control of the
Spanish Crown, was more concerned with its political relations than with its missionary role. (Some observers, in fact, assert that the Church failed to instill a moral/religious/spiritual feeling in the Latin American masses, simply because the Church was so embroiled in the political atmosphere of the colonial period.)

With the outbreak of the independence movements in the early 1800's, relations between the Church in Latin America and the Spanish Crown became confused. "Due to the breakdown of Spanish authority and the alarming decline of the Catholic hierarchy in America," a deterioration in the communications between the Church in Latin American and Rome occurred.

Early on, the Papacy refused to listen to Latin American separatists' demands for the transference of the right of patronage from Spain to the newly independent states. In the same vein, the Papacy refused to grant political recognition. However, with the practical achievement of national independence among the Latin American states, the Pope apparently accepted a neutral attitude toward the new governments in Latin America. By 1831, the Papacy had recognized the independence of most countries. But to the present day,


\[\text{\textsuperscript{24}}\text{Mecham, p. 61.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{25}}\text{Ibid., p. 64.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{26}}\text{Ibid., p. 85.}\]
the Papacy has maintained the right of patronage, never yielding to the notion that patronage is an inherent right of sovereignty.

During this period, to the end of the 1800's, the Church was in marked disarray, particularly in light of the discrepancy concerning the legitimate authority over the Church. Confusion also reigned, since many in the hierarchy remained loyal to Spain, even though the Pope had recognized newly liberated governments. But it wasn't until the 1890's that we see the Papacy embrace the Church in Latin America and attempt to direct it towards more formulated goals, more consistent with its religious ideals.

In 1891, Pope Leo XIII issued his Rerum Novarum. This encyclical was significant because if focused on the situation of the urban poor.\(^{27}\) "It was designed as part of a more comprehensive program to enable the Church to deal with the major economic and social problems of the day."\(^{28}\)

Rerum Novarum to a large extent, was politically motivated. It was an attempt to preserve the loyalty of blue collar/city workers and thwart advances by Marxism in Latin America. (The effect that Rerum Novarum had on holding off Marxism is yet another question. But it certainly had an effect on the direction of the Church.)

\(^{27}\) Schmitt, p. 4.

We can detect, upon the issuance of this encyclical, "a turning inward" and a "reevaluation of the Church's position in society."\textsuperscript{29} Prior to this time, the Church was politically active, mostly to preserve its status and position in the traditional power structure. After Rerum Novarum, "a form of ghetto Catholicism developed. . . the Church divorced itself from national, political, economic and social life."\textsuperscript{30}

We can also note that this encyclical initiated an emphasis on the religious nature of the Church, but it is debatable if it caused a change in its political relations. In time, after other encyclicals were issued along the same lines, we can note a significant deterioration of the political strength and power of the Church. This suggests that action taken to fulfill new social and religious ideals might has sapped the strength of the Church in its political relations.

Various organizations and movements arose in Latin America in the early 1900's to implement the philosophy of Rerum Novarum. Most vigorous support was exhibited by Churches in Chile, Mexico and Brazil.\textsuperscript{31} These efforts to develop programs in support of Papal directives were structure around the

\textsuperscript{29}Schmitt, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{30}\textit{Ibid}.

\textsuperscript{31}\textit{Ibid}., p. 16.
Church's paternalistic, traditional framework which had solidified in the 1800's.

Such clerically-directed paternalistically-organized programs began to give way to independent action, sponsored by social organizations having Catholic support. So-called "Catholic Action" was given momentum by "Quadragesimo Anno," an encyclical issued in 1931 by Pope Pius XI, forty years after Rerum Novarum.

In this encyclical, Pope Pius XI called for an extension of Christian principles to all of Latin American society. In so doing, he was asking that Churches deny their support to communist regimes and movements.

Though the political power of the Church continued on its down-hill course, the higher clergy, for the most part, remained conservative. The prohibition against Communism gave them the incentive to support local dictators. It is for this reason, and others, that the Church continued to be labelled as a conservative element, part of the traditional power structure of Latin America. (To be sure, there were sprinklings of progressive Churches, movements and organizations throughout Latin America.)

"In an attempt to bring the Church more up to date, Pope John XXIII, in the early 1960's shifted away from a defensive approach to the outside world, seeking to modify
institutional rigidity and anachronistic liturgy."\(^3\)\(^2\) He sought these objectives via papal appointments, encyclicals and the concerns of Vatican II. Latin America and other less developed regions were very much in mind when the Papacy called for a variety of sweeping changes.

The Pope and Vatican II laid the foundations for a more open attitude to the full spectrum of political philosophies and forms of governments. Pope John reaffirmed the Papacy's long-standing benevolent attitude toward popular forms of government, but he went one step further. His emphasis on "the social use of private property and on legitimacy of some forms of public ownership, seemed to move Rome toward neutrality in the ideological cold war between capitalist individualism and socialist collectivism."\(^3\)\(^3\)

The concerns of Pope John XXIII and Vatican II had an enormous effect on Latin American Churches, which were often caught up in political conflicts between rightist and leftist forces. This new direction advanced by the Pope has helped to breakdown long-standing trends toward conservativism and the ideological isolation of many Latin American Churches.

Pope Paul VI, from the mid 1960's to the present, has continued to issue encyclicals along the same lines as his

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\(^3\)\(^2\)Einaudi et al., p. 36.

\(^3\)\(^3\)Ibid., p. 37.
predecessor. In his Popularum Progressio of 1967, he identified Latin America as part of the Third World. This was significant because it implied the need for change and has helped to create a climate for action and innovation in Latin America.

Obviously, the encyclicals and attitudes of Pope John and Pope Paul have been significant in the political evolution of the Church. Both have emphasized the need for a more effective hierarchical structure which would facilitate the implementation of programs and organizations sponsored by the Church. However, the political thrust of these events is still in the process of being felt in Latin America. It is unclear at the present time if and when these aspirations will be realized.

The prominent theme which weaves through this particular study of Papal-Church relations is the influence which the Papacy is attempting to exert upon the Church. It is very difficult, if not impossible, to determine a causal relationship between Papal activities and Church response. However, we have been able to discern certain trends marked by Papal initiatives.

The Church has been susceptible to other forces which urge it down roads, at times contradictory, to Papal directives. The next perspective, or way of looking at the Church, identifies pressures coming from within the Latin American hierarchical structure.
Hierarchical Structure

The Catholic Church in Latin America has been besieged by internal pressures and tensions, generally due to this structural fragmentation. The Church has experienced this problem since its arrival on the Latin American continent centuries ago. Most political observers feel that structural fragmentation detracts from the effectiveness of Church action. However, there are some who assert that this phenomenon is a blessing in disguise. It is from this perspective, of structural fragmentation, diversity and division, that we will initiate the next phase of this study. The fragmentation of the hierarchical structure has been of concern to such prominent authors as Luigi Einaudi, Richard Maulin, Alfred Stepan, Michael Fleet, David Mutchler and Frederick Turner.

The stereotype of an integrated, monolithic Church is too simple and, in fact, a false image. Traditionally, the Church has been decentralized and regionally uncoordinated, a conglomerate of isolated ecclesiastical units. The alleged monolith of the Catholic Church contains an extraordinarily diverse and contradictory array of viewpoints on

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The diversity and disarray within the Church, in its structure and among its personnel, has been recently highlighted, as the Church has attempted to tighten its hierarchical structure and to organize, in order to implement the proposed reforms of Vatican II.

Fragmentation within the Church is due in part to conflicts and tensions among the clergy. In the past, the clergy consisted almost exclusively of individuals from the upper classes. This provided unity to the clergy. However, members of the middle class have gradually been entering their inner sanctum and they have brought with them many of the criticisms and more liberal views expressed by the lower classes.

Another cause of tension among the clergy is the apparent generation gap. Many of those in the higher echelons of the clerical rung are quite old. For example, cardinals in the Latin Church average over 73 years of age,\textsuperscript{35} while those positioned at the lower levels are quite young. It is important to note here that actual age discrepancies are not nearly as overwhelming a problem as are the discrepancies in ideas and philosophies.

\textsuperscript{35}Frederick Turner, Catholicism and Political Development in Latin America, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1971, p. 333.

\textsuperscript{36}Adie and Poitras, p. 163.
A more pressing problem for the Church today is the increasing depletion of its priestly ranks. This has created a situation where in 1960, the average parish in Latin America consisted of 15,332 Catholics and approximately 1 priest per 5500. This last figure is one-tenth that of a similar ratio in the United States.

This alarming scarcity of personnel has led to some other, equally problematical, situations. The Church has been losing touch with the people, and they in turn, are becoming disenchanted with Catholicism. Perhaps a more accurate statement would be that Roman Catholicism is no more than a tradition for many of the people; that ritual and observance are a thing of the past. What this means, essentially for the Church, is that it is gradually losing its grass-roots ideological support, leading to a confused response by the Church and a more critical appraisal of the Church by the masses.

The decline in the number of clerical personnel has forced the Latin American Church to import priests from other regions. Today, one-third of all priests in Latin America are foreigners, coming from such culturally diverse regions...
as North America and Europe. Many foreign priests have been accused by indigenous clergy, of attempting to impose their cultures, life styles, and philosophies on the Latin masses.\textsuperscript{40} Needless to say, this gives rise to tensions within the clerical hierarchy and has added to the conflicts among and within the parishes.

Another phenomenon that has added to these internal tensions, ironically, is Vatican II. The council "provided a certain legitimacy for persons and groups who had previously dissented from anti-Communist political orthodoxy, and in many cases also opened Church structure to increased internal democratization."\textsuperscript{41} However, an institution that has been characterized by its authoritarian, oligarchical structure and has relied, in the past, on papal or state direction, is going to have a difficult time adjusting to the freedoms of democracy. In addition, internal debate over the implementation of Vatican II reforms has tended to polarize the clergy.

There is no doubt that the Church is experiencing a decline in its financial resources (even though its finances are not well documented.) The significance of its financial

\textsuperscript{40}see Ivan Illich, "The Seamy Side of Charity" in Schmitt, pp. 152-163.

\textsuperscript{41}Einaudi et al., p. 39.
status has some bearing on relationships among the clergy. Some observers of the Catholic Church see this as yet another cause for conflict in the Church. David Mutchler, a sociologist, asserts that the depletion of its wealth has created competition and, at times, conflict among the varied clerical personnel, due to their frantic search for funds within and without Latin America.\(^4^2\)

Further fragmentation exists as a result of Church efforts (after Vatican II) to increase the day-to-day effectiveness of Catholicism.\(^4^3\) To enable it to run as an efficient organization, specialization, along with greater bureaucratization, has been introduced into the Church. For example, "religious" priests working with the masses on a daily basis, find themselves (uncomfortably) working beside "staff" personnel, assigned to a particular diocese and trained in secular disciplines.\(^4^4\) Consequently, "the fragmentation of practical authority implicit in the structural complexity of the Roman Catholic Church is compounded by the presence within each diocese of several types of religious personnel."\(^4^5\)


\(^4^3\) Ibid., p. 6.

\(^4^4\) Ibid., pp. 6-11.

\(^4^5\) Einaudi et al., p. 14.
Most observers of the Catholic Church concur with this rather disheartening appraisal of the Church in Latin America. However, as was noted earlier, there is some disagreement over the political implications of this situation. Particularly in terms of effecting social change and having a hand in the direction of Latin society, many observers view internal fragmentation as a liability. For example, the data on the scarcity of personnel raises questions concerning the ability of the Church to penetrate all facets of Latin society with its spiritual and religious message. Another view is that internal debate of any nature tends to weaken the already tenuous organizational unity of the Church. An additional analysis asserts that organizational conflict negates the ability of the religious institution to be effective on a day-to-day basis. Furthermore, any form of internal dissension dissipates the energy and stifles the potential of the Church to aid actively and constructively in the development of Latin America.

On the other hand, some observers see advantages in further specialization and a more developed Church bureaucracy.

Ibid., p. 19.
Ibid., p. 74.
Mutchler, p. 5.
Turner, p. 241; Mutchler, p. 8.
Despite some incidental problems, an intensified bureaucracy allows the Church to maintain its autonomy as a religiously directly organization.\textsuperscript{50} Another intriguing line of thought suggests that "it is most advantageous for the Church to have a diversity of wings [ideologically speaking], at least one of which can make an effective rapprochement to whatever movement takes power at a particular time."\textsuperscript{51}

In any case, general agreement exists that there is internal diversity and fragmentation within the hierarchical structure of the Church. We assert here that this situation has created a vacuum, allowing other groups and organizations, religiously and ideologically motivated, to fill in the gaps and lure away faithful Catholics from the grasp of the Church. Consequently, not only do we see a Church hemorrhaging internally and being pressured by higher Catholic authorities, but we can discern secular and non-Catholic forces pressuring the Church in Latin America as well. This leads us into our next section--an examination of secular and non-Catholic forces which contribute to the pressures bearing down on the Catholic Church.

\textsuperscript{50} Vallier, Catholicism, Social Control and Modernization in Latin America, p. 90.

\textsuperscript{51} Turner, p. 205.
New Trends in Latin America

Up to the 20th century, the Catholic Church in Latin America was universally accepted as the dominant religious culture. The Latin American masses were educated in one philosophy and had established a style of living consistent with the principles of the Church. The fact that the Church was able to win and maintain the loyalty of the masses, was due in no small part to the state's support of that institution. The Church experienced virtually no challenge to its religious monopoly and was confident in the support of the Latin American masses during this period.

With the independence movements, the Church, in many cases, was not awarded the total support of the state, which it had known in the past. Coupled with this situation, was the introduction into Latin America of various movements, professing philosophies which were different and, at times, contradictory to those of the Church. The challenge which these movements present to the Church has been explored by many authors, including Luigi Einaudi, Richard Maulin, Alfred Stepan, Michael Fleet, Ivan Vallier and Frederick Turner.

Since their introduction, a few of these movements have grown and flourished in Latin America. They have encroached on the "territory" of the Church to the point where the Church's religious monopoly has been broken. In

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fact, their combined success has struck an unprecedented chord of fear in the Church and has given rise to additional insecurities, tensions and conflicts within its hierarchy and in its relations with Latin American society.

In the past fifty years, political movements from the Left and Protestantism, have increasingly posed a threat to the Church, challenging its moral authority and continued institutional existence.\(^5\) All "preach a new reward system, assume a militant posture against the existing social order, and articulate a cohesive set of anti-Catholic views."\(^6\) Whereas anti-clerical movements in the 1800's attempted to remove the Church from the political sphere, these new movements, since World War I, have been challenging the Church in its remaining cultural, philosophical and religious sphere of influence.\(^7\)

Perhaps more threatening than their arrival onto the Latin American scene, is their strategy for capturing the attention and loyalties of the people. Protestantism and Marxism, for example, are movements which appeal to the lay person, to the very grass-roots support of the Church. Unfortunately, the Catholic Church is structurally and philosophically a "vertical" institution, with little emphasis placed

\(^{5}\)Einaudi et al, p. IV.


\(^{7}\)Ibid.
on integrating the layman into its organization. The Church is ill-equipped to attempt "horizontal solidarity" and thereby successfully ward off challenges from these movements.\(^5\)\(^6\)

In addition, these movements have been causing some tension within the Church hierarchy. Often, controversy has given way to friction because the clergy have not yet arrived at a consensus on how to deal with this new and threatening situation.

Consistent with this theme, we can note some new sociological trends which pressure the Church as well. The rising importance of marginal status groups, which previously had remained outside of the power structure, have been demanding and receiving more power as part of the decision-making system. Here, we are referring to such groups as the middle class, university students, peasants and farmers. So today, the Church must consider a wider and more diverse range of influential groups in structuring its political alignments.

Another sociological trend that is affecting the Church as well as other movements, in recent years, is the effort to modernize Latin America, particularly via technological advancements. Developments in the area of mass communications can affect the way in which religious functions are performed and how policies and doctrines are filtered down to the grass-roots level.\(^5\)\(^7\)

\(^5\)\(^6\)Ibid., pp. 195-197.

\(^5\)\(^7\)Turner, p. 196.
advantage of these developments, certainly other movements will, in order to more effectively indoctrinate the masses and capture their attention. So the Church, to ward off further advances by Protestantism and secular movements, and to maintain the loyalty of various interest groups, is being pressured to reorganize and reorient its religious communities by taking full advantage of technological developments.\(^5^8\)

It has been claimed that there is a "new rhythm" to Latin American society today, due in part to secular and anti-Catholic movements and to more subtle sociological trends (e.g., the emergence of aggressive interest groups, population shifts to urban centers, growth of a vibrant middle class, and technological advances).\(^5^9\) This "new rhythm" in Latin America is challenging the traditional institutions and their more authoritative and conservative ideologies and modes of behavior. Today, attention focuses more on the demands and needs of those at the bottom end of society, rather than on the desires and whims of the ruling elite.

These new circumstances call for a change in the policies and hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church. They also beg for a shift in the conservative political posture of the Church, which it traditionally has assumed.


\(^5^9\) Vallier, "Religious Elites," p. 194.
Church Response

The following examination of the clerical response to the changing Latin American environment represents the fifth approach to viewing the Catholic Church. This aspect deals primarily with that minority of clerics and laymen who are calling for an emerging new Church, one that will shed its cloak of conservativism. It views their varied efforts to unite a Church that is in disarray politically and failing on the religious front. The generation of progressive and radical ideas from within the hierarchical structure of the Church in response to new trends in Latin American society has been studied by Robert Adie, Guy Poitras, Guenter Lewy, and John Martz amongst others.

To meet the demands of a changing Latin American environment, some significant developments within the Church have occurred. Since World War II, the laity have played an increasingly important role, various organizations and activities have appeared and grown, and a Catholic-inspired party has entered the political forum.

The more liberal and radical sectors of the laity, varying of course, from country to country, have become a real force in opening the Church to more progressive policies and attitudes. It should be noted, though, that "the thinking of these individuals is influential in shaping Church
policies only to the extend that its first affects the views of the narrow Church hierarchy.""60

The laity have made their views public through various organizations and at various meetings. In much the same way, certain sectors of the clergy have aired their thoughts and attitudes. The most familiar example is the Latin American Bishops' Council (CELAM), a regional forum where Latin clergy express their demands for reform.61

This organization, founded in 1955, has evolved into a major network for the dissemination of material focusing on Church reform, modernization, and social change.62 However, CELAM has not quite played the advocacy role originally envisioned.63 In any case, CELAM represents initial efforts by clerics to unite on a large scale and attempt to direct the Church.

There are many who find that organizations like CELAM do not serve their more radical interests. So several clergy have formed organizations, at times following the lead of Camilo Torres, the guerilla priest from Colombia. To date, there are various revolutionary groups in several Latin American countries. However, they have not yet had a formidable

60 Turner, p. 47.
61 Adie and Poitras, p. 181.
62 Schmitt, p. 23.
63 Adie and Poitras, p. 181.
impact in swaying the policies of the Church. It is noteworthy that in the past, impatient radical clergy often left the Church. Today they are remaining within the ranks and justifying "their radicalism by references to the revolutionary dynamic they see inherent in the Christian message." 

These are but a few of the efforts by clergy and laymen to change the direction of the Church and to make it more responsive to Latin society. Perhaps the organization that has the greatest potential, according to many political observers, to act as a cohesive force and directional base for the Church, is the Christian Democratic Party. It holds this for the Church because it is able to compete in the political arena, unlike internal Church and lay organizations.

Christian Democracy is a Catholic-inspired movement which originated in the inter-war period, and came into its own in the 50's and 60's. It surfaced as a viable, national political party in Chile and Venezuela, securing the Presidency in Chile in the year 1964 and in Venezuela in 1968. The relation of Christian Democracy to the Catholic Church is fairly clear. It has been inspired not only by western

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64Lewy, Religion and Revolution, p. 533.

65Vallier, Catholicism, Social Control and Modernization in Latin America, p. 92.

democracy and socialism, but by the more progressive papal social encyclicals. In fact, the early Christian Democratic Parties were basically Catholic lay political movements.  

For example, the Falange National, the forerunner of the Chilean Christian Democratic Party, was established by Catholic laymen in Chile in the late 1930's under the influence of progressive clergy.

It is important to note that there is no direct tie with the ecclesiastical structure. "Nevertheless, progressive clergy are able to support political leaders who, if electorally successful, will be receptive to the demands of the progressive clergy and, more than that, will do what they can to implement the demands through their official positions in government."  

The implications of a successful Christian Democratic Party are enormous for the Church. In the past, direct political activity by the Church (which was a necessity in order to maintain its status and influence) was costly, in the sense that it sapped the strength and energy that should have been directed to religious and social concerns. But Christian Democracy, from the perspective of the Church, serves to negate the need for direct clerical political involvement.

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67 Schmitt, p. 23.
68 Ibid.
69 Adie and Poitras, p. 179.
70 Vallier, "Religious Elites," p. 209
In turn, the Church can concentrate on non-secular matters. In this sense, Christian Democratic Parties act as a buffer between the Church and the political arena.\textsuperscript{71}

It has been asserted that in the absence of a strong Christian Democratic Party, political expression will remain fragmented.\textsuperscript{72} It is also claimed that such a party is a condition for long-term development in Latin America.\textsuperscript{73} From a hypothetical viewpoint, this might be the case. However, the Christian Democratic Parties, in most countries today, are invariably fragmented. In Chile, for instance, a schism has developed between those clergy who are seeking ideological purity and those who are practically inclined.\textsuperscript{74}

There are many clergy who have tremendous hopes for Christian Democracy and what it can do for Latin America and for the Church. However, there are those outside of the Church who would favor the formation of Christian Democratic Parties, but for precisely the opposite reasons of the clergy. From this latter viewpoint, to subsume the political energies of the Church into a political party, effectively removes the

\textsuperscript{71}Vallier, Catholicism, Social Control and Modernization in Latin America, p. 92.

\textsuperscript{72}Einaudi et al., p. 59.

\textsuperscript{73}Vallier, Catholicism, Social Control and Modernization in Latin America, p. 92.

\textsuperscript{74}Martz, p. 206.
sacrosanct stature of the Church as a critic of society. While from the viewpoint of the clergy, the Christian Democratic Parties serve the role of a buffer, from the viewpoint of those outside of the Church, the Christian Democratic Parties can serve as a vehicle of co-optation.

These various attempts to unite the Church and to direct the Church are important precisely because the old style of politics is removed. Clerics and laymen are trying to create an effective Church, but one that is above politics. These are attempts to maintain a powerful, influential Church, by political maneuverings from within the Church.

Adaptation

Five perspectives have been outlined in the previous pages. Each highlights a different "face" of the Church and suggests or intimates something about its future as a religious and political institution in Latin America. To be sure, there is some controversy over the condition and status of the Catholic Church, but a hazy picture can be drawn from these studies, nevertheless.

We can discern an institution that has lost much of its political clout. It has, for the most part, continued to be identified as a conservative institution. There is another face to the Church, a Church that is threatened by non-Catholic movements and pressured by clerical forces from within and without the Latin American continent. Finally, we have
noted recent attempts by clergy and laymen to cope with this situation.

These varied, seemingly disjointed themes fit into place and form a clear picture when we examine the Church from yet another perspective. This should be regarded as more than another way of looking at the Church, for this approach has the effect of tying together the other five, as an all-encompassing theme. It is found, at least implicitly, to varying extents, throughout the major works on the Church. It is a theme that explains how and why the Church is able to survive in a rapidly and vastly changing society. It also serves to illustrate the Church's response, in many cases, to the various pressures bearing down upon it.

The Catholic Church is a follower or a responder.  
"It is an example of that type of organization which is overwhelmingly conservative, ... becomes an integral part of the existing order, ...(and which knows to attain her end) by a process of adaptation and compromise."  
Out of the sheer will to survive and the need for accommodation, the Church has proven itself to be a flexible institution and, more recently, a legitimator of social change.

75 Vallier, Catholicism, Social Control and Modernization in Latin America, p. 158.

This theory of adaptation, as it shall henceforth be called, is founded in the nature of Church doctrines. They are sufficiently and purposely flexible and ambiguous, leaving room for interpretation so that the Church can respond to a variety of situations.\(^7\) A good measure of this ambiguity can be attributed to "highly abstract theological and metaphysical foundations of Catholic political theory, but much is a matter of design that serves to pave the way for the Church's adjustment to different situations."\(^8\)

The lack of precision in Catholic social doctrines allows the Church to coexist with a variety of different regimes.\(^8\) Pope Leo XIII, in 1890, officially established this principle, "it is not her province to decide which is the best amongst many diverse forms of government, and the civil institutions of Christian states, and amid the various kinds of state rule she does not disapprove of any, provided the respect due to religion and the observance of good morals be upheld."\(^9\) His successors upheld this doctrine. Pope Pius XI in 1933 reinforced this notion of Church neutrality.\(^1\) Though there admittedly has been a trend to support popular regimes, the Church can still manage under other forms of governments.

\(^{77}\text{Ibid.}, p. 326,\)
\(^{78}\text{Ibid.}\)
\(^{79}\text{Turner, p. 89.}\)
\(^{80}\text{Lewy, The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany, pp. 327-328.}\)
\(^{81}\text{Ibid.}, p. 328.\)
The Church as an institution, acts on behalf of its own interests and its own survival. It will support a regime that will, in turn, protect the welfare of its position in society and its spiritual mission. This explains, for the most part, the reason for the Church's political posture in the past. It has "traditionally been associated with conservative forces because it is a source of power, as well as a source of personal security and prestige." 82

In addition, the possibility of success is a remarkably persuasive force in determining the attitude of the Church to many political movements. 83 This played a part in the Church's attitude towards the independence movements of the early 1800's. The fact that many of these movements were grossly anticlerical, further persuaded the Church to cling to its traditional means of support, the conservative ruling powers.

However, there are limitations to the breadth of Church support for political regimes. "Neutrality of the Church toward various forms of government derives from the fact that the chief concern of the Church is with the supernatural aspects of human existence." 84 When governments violate the moral principles of the Judeo-Christian tradition

82 Turner, p. 107.
83 Lewy, The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany, p. 334.
84 Ibid., p. 332.
and the fundamental rights of the Church, it will withdraw its support and transfer it to a rebel group, with the assurance that its interests will be protected and that there is a real possibility that the rebels will prevail.  

The ability of the Church to adapt is not confined to its relations with governments. It also enables the Church to be flexible and to react to the ever-changing social and political environment in Latin America.

The Church, early on, developed in Latin America, a strategy of survival, "a maximization of short-run gains when conditions are favorable, an exercising of restraint in periods of uncertainty, and an ever-ready willingness to be inconsistent if the situation demands it." Church activities were confined to short-run maneuverings by coalescing with other power groups. Again, this explains Church allegiance to conservative forces in power.

The independence movements and anti-clerical ideologies presented a dilemma to the Church. To support them meant losing much of its power and base of support. Yet, to remain loyal to conservative forces meant clinging to a sinking ship. So to maintain its status and at the same time to insulate itself from diverse secular influences and rivalries, the

85Ibid., p. 336.

86Vallier, Catholicism, Social Control and Modernization in Latin America, p. 25.

Church began to build up its own institutions (e.g., trade unions, schools, and youth movements). This period illustrates the Church's ability to exhibit restraint in the midst of an unsettled environment. Emerging from this period, appeared a Church as diverse as the types of governments and social attitudes prevailing in Latin America.

It must be noted that the Church is by no means quick to adapt to a changing environment. It often needs a push by some outside forces to move it along. Papal encyclicals and attitudes have served this purpose well. Needless to say, their thinking, beginning with Pope Leo XIII, has helped move the Church in this direction. In fact, a major emphasis of Pope John XXIII's was to adjust its traditional policies and actions to contemporary times.

In modern times, fear underlies change in the Church. It is the fear that secular forces, and in particular, anti-Catholic forces, will diminish the power, status and mass support of the Church. Protestantism has converted many Catholics since the 1900's in Latin America. Ironically, Protestantism has flourished because it learned fast, that to succeed in Latin America, it had to adapt to the Latin environment. (It has provided welfare to the masses and stressed

88Vallier, Catholicism, Social Control and Modernization in Latin America, p. 8.

egalitarian relationships.) In an attempt to offset these gains, the Church has "increased the number of priests, intensified efforts to encourage vocations, multiplied its dioceses, and increased its parishes."\(^{91}\)

The Church is also threatened by Marxism and other anti-Christian movements. An adaptive response, in part, lies in its attempt to increase mass support for the Church by confronting some of the social and economic problems of the people.\(^{92}\) This is a pragmatic response, one of the more outstanding pervasive shifts in Catholic attitudes.\(^{93}\) At the same time, the effort to broaden the base of Church support is an attempt to consider various groups which were once the marginal groups of Latin American society.

A central theme in the Church's response to these situations today is the fact that the Church is gaining independence from the State. Church leaders have begun to realize that Church dominance is no longer maintained on a political basis with the ruling powers.\(^{94}\) Good relations with the

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\(^{91}\)Houtart and Pin, pp. 156-157.

\(^{92}\)Turner, p. 207.

\(^{93}\)Ibid.

\(^{94}\)Vallier, Catholicism, Social Control and Modernization in Latin America, p. 7.
political group or groups in power are no longer sufficient to preserve the status, influence and power of the Catholic Church. Thus the clergy have begun to address themselves to what is happening on the total Latin American scene.

An integral part of this new attitude and involvement in Latin American society is the Church's role in the development process in Latin America. The Church is not an innovator when it comes to social change, but a reinforcer or legitimator of patterns of change. This inclination is a natural outgrowth of the Church's adaptive tendencies. The social-political environment is following a certain path and the Church, as a responsive institution, is following in its footsteps.

There are many observers who assert that the vitality of Latin American society, unable to cope with the complexities of modernization, is critically deteriorating. If this is the case, then the Church in adjusting to society, is only reinforcing its own deterioration. The principle of adaptation which has enabled the Latin American Church to survive and prosper for the last four centuries, ironically, could lead to the Church's own undoing. As a tool of survival, the present concept of adaptation may be outmoded, to be replaced by a broader view of "adaptting" to a future society, i.e., "innovating" in the context of the present society.
In light of the theoretical discussion of the previous section, Chapters II and III constitute comparative studies of Church activities and policies in Colombia and Chile. It may seem paradoxical that we plan to consider these two countries, which are so divergent with regard to the experiences of the Catholic Church. They represent extreme cases for the following reasons: the Colombian Church is considered a conservative institution, whereas the Church in Chile is rated as the most progressive in Latin America; the Colombian Church is state supported, while the Chilean Church is legally separated from the State.

We have purposely chosen countries of such extremes because they provide the best test for the proposed principle of adaptation. Certainly, the validity of this principle is clearer in such extreme cases where the need for adaptation is more pronounced. If we fail to succeed in applying the theme of adaptation to these two extreme cases, there is certainly little hope of viewing it in other Latin American countries.

In the same spirit of looking at extreme cases in Latin America, we would also like to look at critical times within each country. In terms of Colombia and Chile, this means a greater concentration on certain key political events that have taken place in the twentieth century.
CHAPTER II

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN COLOMBIA

Colombia has often been considered the most Catholic of all Latin American countries. This is due in large part to the prominent position that the Church has occupied in Colombian society. The enormous wealth, the overwhelming influence in education and the legal recognition of the Roman Catholic Church as the state religion certify the observation that "the Catholic Church has been more tenacious in its hold upon national and civil life in Colombia than in any other Latin American country."¹

Not only does the Church have a pervasive hold on Colombian society, but it has been considered one of the most conservative Churches in Latin America. "The defense of its own institutional interests, the nature of its doctrines and internal organization and, its relationships to its flock"² have all led the Church to support traditional values. Particularly in the 19th and early 20th centuries, the tendency for an authoritarian, conservative and, needless to say,


influential Church, was secured by the unusually strong bond and legally sanctioned interdependence between Church and State. ³

The Colombian Church is a highly politicized Church, enmeshed in the mainstream of politics at all societal levels.⁴ The role and influence of the Church has been one source of political division throughout most of Colombian history, particularly at the level of political party competition. To be sure, the Church has been so entangled in party politics, that its partisan involvement, at times, has tended to negate its potential conciliatory role and to render ineffective its spiritual role.⁵ One observer has even flatly stated that "the Catholic religion has been rather a source of conflict and bloody disunity among Colombians."⁶

To a large extent, Church dominance and its relationship to the state were determined by the particular party in


⁵Dix, p. 310.

power, though this occurred in a more strict sense during the 19th century. More precisely, the position of the Church paralleled the rise and fall of the Conservative Party. The Church hierarchy felt threatened by the Liberal Party's ascension to power and relieved by its downfall, each of which occurred periodically.

Basically, the Conservative-Liberal schism developed in the mid-1800's out of competition among the elites of Colombian society for the control of government. In essence, "the principles invoked on one side were those of religion, morality, property, and family; and on the other, the counter-values and counter-norms of liberty, progress, popular sovereignty and the right of suffrage." Some observers suggest that the Conservatives used the Catholic religion as a means of tapping mass support. In any case, the bulk of the Church hierarchy, fast identified its interests with the pro-clerical party. As a consequence of the Church's alignment with the Conservatives, Liberals adopted a posture of extreme anti-clericalism. This is evident not only in their policies aiming to reduce the secular influence of the Church, but in the frequent expulsion of Jesuits from Colombia when they came into power.

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7Ibid., p. 108.


9Dix., p. 307.
This situation remained constant through the early 1900's. However, since that time, various factors have emerged in Colombia and within the hierarchical institution which have disrupted the Church's traditional position vis-a-vis the two parties and Colombian society. Briefly, the effect of modernization, unaccustomed dictatorial rule, the creation of the National Front, the emergence of the "rebel priest" and the rise of Protestantism, have each had a significant impact on the politically conservative, authoritarian posture of the Catholic Church. For example, with the establishment of the National Front, political power was dispersed among the competing factions, though a ruling elite still remained. This situation allowed the Church to withdraw not only from the political arena, but also from the partisan position it had occupied in the past. On a more localized level, the Church has had to contend with the "rebel priest," who has directly challenged the authority and sanctity of the Roman Catholic Church before the eyes of the Colombian masses. So within the past forty years, the Colombian Church has undergone enormous changes in response to the changing environment and is considered by many to be in the midst of a reforming period.

These brief remarks have been intended to serve as an overview of the Colombian Church. The next phase of this case study will be directed toward a closer examination of the Catholic Church from an historical point of view, with the various "faces" of the Church in mind. A concluding section
will follow, coordinating these "faces" with the all-encompassing theme of adaptation.

Church History

Independence from Spain had a minimal effect on the status of the Church in Colombia. Though it was somewhat "weakened by the loss of protection of the Spanish Crown, by uncertainties of republican life and the spirit of liberalism," the Catholic Church easily maintained its privileged position. Church influence was due in no small part to its large landholdings and its control of the Colombian educational system. In addition, in the early years of independence, many clergy held congressional seats and high administrative offices.

From independence to the mid 1840's, the Church united with the military and landowners, forming a triumvirate of power-holders. In the Colombian Constitution of 1832, Roman Catholicism was declared the state religion, barring the public worship of any other faith. Also indicative of governmental guardianship was the return of the Jesuits, who had been expelled in 1767. Due in part to Papal appreciation for the intimate Church-State relations, Colombia was the first state in Latin American recognized by the Pope as being independent from Spain.

\[10\] Ibid., p. 306.
These actions by the State and the Pope are significant because they mark the beginning of certain trends evident throughout the history of the Catholic Church in Colombia. The recognition of Colombian independence by the Pope signalled close Papal-Church relations for the future, climaxing in the Concordat of 1886. The recognition of Roman Catholicism as the state religion, as declared by the Colombian Constitution, marked the integral relationship between Church and State. The welcome extended to the Jesuits was a reflection of the partisan political stance adopted by the Church, for when the Liberals were in power, the Jesuits were quickly expelled from the country. Finally, this period depicts the Church's apparent desire to be protected by those in power. One observer wryly explains its reluctance to separate itself from the state as the Church's willingness "to take its chances on being controlled by the government in return for the chance of being able to control the government." ¹¹

The first period of Liberal rule, from approximately 1845 to 1857, was highlighted by a series of severe laws attacking the traditional bases of Church control, in an attempt to reduce the dominant position of the Church in the economic, social, and political spheres of Colombian society. Marriage was made an obligatory civil ceremony and divorce was legalized

(both marriage and divorce had been in the sacred realm of the Church), the ecclesiastical privilege of separate courts was abolished, the Jesuits were expelled, town councils and parish residents were given the legal privilege of electing their own priests, the state assumed the education of Catholic priests, etc. The most striking blow was wielded by the Liberal Congress in 1853, when the first act of separation of Church and State in Latin America was passed. Ironically, for the Church, this act brought about near servitude to, rather than freedom from, the State.\textsuperscript{12}

These direct attacks on the Church provoked sharp reactions from some of the more conservative clergy. A "Catholic Manifesto" was circulated around the state delineating the "foul deeds" of those in power. An archbishop was even exiled for his keen opposition to these acts.

Conservatives then regained governmental control for a few very short years. Many of the laws previously passed by the Liberals were reversed or tempered. For example, Jesuits were again welcomed back and the divorce law was rescinded. The harsh law of civil marriages was modified so that religious marriages were tolerated as long as they were immediately registered with a judge or notary. "But it proved to be merely the calm before the storm--the most devastating storm ever experienced by the Catholic Church in Colombia."\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{12}Mecham, p. 122.
\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., p. 123.
The next two decades, until the election of Rafael Nunez in 1880, have been regarded as the most severe period of State anticlericalism.\textsuperscript{14} The President of Colombia, in 1861, in the name of "protection," denied the independence and integrity of the Church by declaring "that no cleric could exercise his religious functions without the authorization of the president of the republic or government of a state."\textsuperscript{15} Similar radical decrees were made, climaxing with the Constitution of 1863, legally separating the spheres of Church and State. Many clergy protested the persecution of the Church and several were exiled for voicing their opposition.

Following the downfall of this particular regime, the Liberals continued to control government, but enacted less extreme policies toward Catholics. Yet, the civil war in 1876 highlighted the deep division parting the Colombian masses over the religious issue. It has been asserted that the civil struggle was a "clerical revolution."\textsuperscript{16} Much of the protest was directed against the secularization of Colombian society, in particular, the inclination to extinguish Church control of the educational system. In response, the clergy in certain areas ignored government directives and organized their own schools.

\textsuperscript{14}Holt, p. 29.

\textsuperscript{15}Mecham, p. 123.

\textsuperscript{16}Fals Borda, p. 109.
President Nunez, a Liberal-turned-Conservative, resurrected the Church to its previously privileged position in the mid 1880's. Under his guidance, a new Constitution was framed, "which continues to be the fundamental law under which Colombians are governed today, [it] was significant religiously in that it recognized the primacy of the Catholic Church and symbolized the triumph of the clerical party."\(^{17}\)

A key element of the Constitution of 1886 was the authorization of a Concordat between the Colombian government and the Papacy in Rome. The Concordat, signed in 1887, established Catholicism as the state religion, further strengthening its official status as it was written into the Constitution. The Church regained full control of the national educational system, its privileges were restored and it was compensated by the government for damages caused by prior Liberal government confiscation of Church property.\(^{18}\) The Concordat was hailed by clerical authorities as a model for Church-State relations.

The Church consolidated its power and influence during the Conservative hegemony of fifty years, from 1880-1930. The most significant occurrence during this period was the Liberal's implicit acceptance of Catholicism as the predominant

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\(^{17}\)Meehan, p. 126.

\(^{18}\)Holt, p. 175.
religion in Colombia. Essentially, this signified a mini-

mization of the religious issue as a major determinant of party policy.

The Liberal Party, in power from 1930-1946, no longer tried to unseat the Church from its privileged place, but it did attempt to modify the Church's secular role. The main thrust of some constitutional amendments and a revision of the 1887 Concordat was aimed at limiting clerical control over education. However, the government weakly exercised its educational prerogatives.¹⁹

Conservatives regained governmental leadership from 1946 to 1953 and attempted to gather mass support by coaxing the Church into direct secular reinvolvement in support of Conservative ideology.²⁰ This period in Colombian history was perhaps the bloodiest and most immediately damaging to the Church. An anti-Church fury spread throughout the country following the assassination of the Liberal leader, Jorge Eliecar Gaitan, in Bogota. "Churches, convents, ecclesiasti-
cal colleges, schools and institutions were burned and the clergy were seized, killed, and in some cases, horribly mutilated."²¹ It has been suspected that the rioting was

¹⁹Mecham, p. 134.

²⁰John Martz, Colombia: A Contemporary Political Sur-

²¹Vernon Lee Fluharty, Dance of the Millions, Military Rule and the Social Revolution in Colombia, 1930-1956, Pitts-
Communist-inspired, in light of the fact that physical attacks upon the Church were "uncharacteristically unColombian." It has also been suggested that the attacks revealed a latent belligerency among city dwellers toward the Church.

Reaction by the Government turned the bloodshed against the Liberals. The bulk of the Church hierarchy aligned with the Conservatives, even though the highest clerical authorities condemned the violence and urged that clergy refrain from supporting either party. A number of parish priests aggressively supported the Conservative attack on the Liberals and actively discriminated against them. In some areas, prelates refused to administer the sacraments to Liberals, denied their burial in Church cemeteries and demanded that they vote against their own party's candidates for political office. "Because most Protestants were also Liberals, the line between religious persecution and political violence became at times difficult to draw."

Rojas Pinilla extended the Government's anti-Liberal policy and under his tutelage, religious discrimination against non-Catholics was increased. For example, a treaty was

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\(^{22}\)Ibid., p. 103.

\(^{23}\)Corr, p. 65.

\(^{24}\)Dix., p. 309.
negotiated with the Vatican banning all non-Catholic activity in most of the Country.\(^{25}\) At first, a close relationship between his regime and the Church prevailed. However, as the Government degenerated into a reactionary dictatorship and as police repression grew, more and more priests denounced Rojas. Finally, Rojas and the institutional Church parted when the dictator announced plans to perpetuate himself in power.

The withdrawal of Church support from the Rojas Pinilla regime was a key sign not only marking the changing attitudes among the clergy, but highlighting divisions within the Church. The reasons for the abrupt shift in Church policy are not only indicative of some traditional patterns of behavior, but they shed light on one aspect of the Colombian Church which has yet to be examined.

In the past, the Church supported governments which, in turn, protected its interests. But Rojas, in attempting to indefinitely extend his rule, believed that he no longer needed the Church's stamp of approval. The Church, recognizing that this situation was not in its best interests, withdrew its support.

Another reason for the abandonment of Church support was the growing humanistic attitude among the clergy. A small

\(^{25}\)Martz, p. 215.
minority who were concerned with the spiritual and pastoral message of the Church became a vocal group in the institution and helped sway Church influence behind those opposing Rojas Pinilla.

With the regime becoming more dictatorial, the historical schism between Liberals and Conservatives became minimized to the extent that both sides joined in opposition to the government. This is reflected in the coalition between two factions within the Church, clergy who viewed the Church from a traditional political perspective and those taking a modern humanistic approach. These two groups in the past were on opposite sides of the Conservative-Liberal fence. However, the schism between those supporting the traditional, political perspective as opposed to the humanistic approach was broached in their disapproval of the Rojas Pinilla regime, similar to the rapprochement between the Liberals and Conservatives.

The minority which effectively voiced humanistic ideals in the late 1950's developed out of individual action in the 1940's. At that time, there were clergy who refused to view conflict in Colombian society from the singular perspective of Liberal-Conservative politics. Instead, they perceived the growing division among the masses as a consequence of various pressures bearing down upon the country. With an extremely realistic, yet compassionate frame of mind, some clergy proceeded to take steps to counter these new forces.
A radio station in the village of Sutatenza, commonly referred to as Radio Sutatenza, was initiated by a clergyman in 1947 to combat illiteracy and to raise the standard of living among the lower classes. Also in the late 1940's, the Jesuits helped found the Colombian Workers Union (UTC), a labor confederation organized chiefly to counter alleged Communist infiltration in the Colombian Workers Federation. (As a point of clarification, clerical opposition to the Communists, though a seemingly political reaction, was based on Communist disdain for religion.) Many other social programs were begun at that time, not only to counter those set up by non-Catholics, but to raise the consciousness of the Colombian masses.

With the ouster of Rojas Pinilla and the formation of the National Front, these and other programs grew and multiplied under the auspices of the institutional Church. Sometimes, the institutional Church has latched onto such programs and transformed them into instruments of propaganda. The bipartisan "party system" of government established by the National Front allowed the Church to concentrate on its role as political neutral, rather than as political partisan. But more importantly, the Church could redirect the energies which it had funneled into political competition in the past and turn them upon its own organization.

\(^{26}\) Corr, p. 10,  
\(^{27}\) Dix., p. 314.
At approximately the same time, Pope John XXIII was encouraging a modernization of the Catholic Church. The encyclicals emerging from Vatican II sought a more positive, open attitude among the clergy. These efforts by the Vatican certainly strengthened the conviction and hope of those Colombian priests who looked for a greater, more progressive leadership role in their country in the future.

Since the formation of the National Front, Radio Sutatenza has developed into Accion Cultural Popular (ACPO). This enlarged program oversees extension courses, distributes books, and teaches reading and writing, agricultural skills, health and nutritional care, religion, etc. ACPO also publishes a weekly paper, EL Campesino, which has claimed nation-wide readership. The Church has used these resources, of radio broadcasts, books and newspapers, to publicize its positions on various issues. For example, the Church in 1961, advocated the passage of a governmental law supporting agrarian reform. Through its vast media networks, "the Church has made it clear that it regards the concentration of landownership in a few hands as one of the keys to the country's social ills and that in its view the more equitable division of the land is an urgent matter."²⁸ In 1969, to lend credence to this policy, the Church announced that it would hand over its unused farm lands

²⁸Ibid., p. 316.
to the governmental agency overseeing agrarian reform for distribution. \(^{29}\)

Other avenues of charitable action have been developed by the Church, again emanating from individual initiatives. In Bogota in the late 1950's, a model for urban community living was founded, called the Minuto de Dios. Since then, this program has been adopted by various parishes, aimed at attacking the poor living conditions prevalent in the barrios.

The threat of Protestantism, and at the same time, the ecumenical attitude urged by the Pope have led to the adoption of new strategies by the Church to deal with the inroads made by other Christian faiths. The use of violence to thwart Protestantism was abandoned and replaced by "an intensive program of Catholic indoctrination and education so as to render Colombian Catholics impervious to Protestant propaganda."\(^{30}\) The previously established program of Accion Cultural Popular was appropriated for this purpose. From an altogether different approach, the Church eased relations with the Protestants by uniting with them in an effort to ward off the common threat of Communism.

Another reason for the shift in clerical attitudes has to do with the internal organization of the Church. Since the 50's and 60's, fewer sons of the upper classes have been

\(^{29}\)Corr, p. 68.

\(^{30}\)Mecham, p. 135.
entering the priesthood, resulting in a more liberal make-up of Church personnel. In addition, fewer men are entering the priesthood, making for a scarcity of personnel. This situation has been partially remedied by Papal efforts to import foreign priests into Latin American countries suffering from this problem. Today, about one-half of the Colombian clergy are foreign born.\(^3\) This has signified an infusion of relatively liberal-minded priests into the conservative Colombian Catholic Church.

One significant consequence of the liberalization of Church personnel has been efforts by clergy to make their activities more responsive to the needs of the Colombian masses. Two research centers, the Center of Social Research (ICODES) and the Jesuit Center of Social Action and Research (CIAS) were organized to evaluate Church resources and the Church relationship to the masses. Since their inception they have developed into very large and sophisticated management organizations, contracting with foreign governments and other organizations outside of the realm of the Catholic Church.

It is certainly reasonable and more interesting to simply discuss the contemporary Colombian Church in terms of the progressive, action-oriented role of many clergy. However, compared to other Latin American Churches, the Colombian Church

\(^3\)Dix, p. 319.
remains conservative in its policies and attitudes. It is important to remember that those promoting change within the Church and a greater leadership role within Colombian society are still a minority. In addition, many of the new inroads taken by this group have not been as productive as they had hoped. For instance, ICODES and CIAS, though representing not only new roles for the Church, but a centralization of Church authority, have at times been so competitive for the available scarce resources, that they have often lost sight of their prescribed aims. Another obstacle which the Church has not yet overcome, is the way in which it is attempting to relate to the masses. The success of many of its programs has been diminished because it continues to respond to the people in a paternalistic, authoritarian manner.

In attempting to form an overview of the contemporary Colombian Church, we can note an intriguing development: division within the Church. It is apparent that the conservative element within the institution is still predominant. Yet, a minority of clergy is visibly emerging, anxious to change the traditional role of the Church in Colombia. The

most striking example of internal division is highlighted by the actions and philosophy of Camilio Torres. He has been cast as the ultimate symbol of the priest who is frustrated and angered by the lethargic, elitist, hierarchical nature of the institutional Church, yet imbued with the spirit and message of Christianity.

The rebel priest gradually broke away from the Church, first by working within the bounds of the clerical hierarchy to promote change, and eventually joining guerilla forces, abandoning the Church as a springboard for action. Essentially, the acceptance of violence as a means to achieving prescribed goals marks the division between Torres, the Golconda group and others, on the one hand, and the institutional Church.

Since the independence period, the Church has dealt with problems, has responded to the people's needs and has sought change via its assumed role as legitimator, pacifier and arbiter, within the political structure of Colombian society. In fact, its tacit acceptance of the political system and its accommodation to the machinations of Colombian politics have been scorned by Torres and his successors. These characteristics of the Church, as they have been perceived by this group, have not only signalled division within the Church, but have marked the abandonment of the Church by a number of radical priests since the actions of Camilio Torres.
Five Faces of the Church

In the introductory chapter, we outlined the different "faces" of the Latin American Catholic Church. At this juncture, we will briefly note these five aspects in relation to the Church in Colombia.

For the most part, we have discussed the Colombian Church in view of its relations with the state. It is apparent that the Church has been an integral part of the Colombian political system. Not only has it sought acceptance and support within the elitist political sphere, but it has often been the cause of political strife. The role of the Church in politics has grown from that of a partisan activist to an ardent conciliator. Throughout Colombian history, it has developed in line with the emerging political atmosphere, chiefly to guard its religious monopoly and influence in the social and political spheres. Similarly, it has remained a conservative force, supporting the mainstream of Colombian political activity centered around the Liberal and Conservative Parties. To be sure, as elitist parties themselves, the Church has easily accommodated to their basic interests.

Papal-Church relations have been particularly enlightening in the case of Colombia. For example, the Concordat of 1887 further legalized and legitimated the authority of the Catholic Church in Colombia. The Papacy has tried to determine the direction of the Latin American churches through
various decrees. We can clearly see that the trends toward modernizing the Church and gearing it towards greater spiritual activity have become evident in Colombia in recent years. Since the formation of the National Front, in particular, the Church has begun to follow these paths, evidenced most clearly in the increasing number of priests who are working more closely with the people by broadening their social, pastoral activity. The development of organizations likeICODES and CIAS also are prime examples of the Church's efforts to restructure from within.

Compared to other state churches, the consistency of the Colombian Church, with regard to its conservative posture and pervasive influence, gives it the appearance of a monolithic Church. This is clearly not the case, particularly in recent Colombian history. Division among the clergy is marked by an emerging clerical group concerned with the spiritual-social sphere of the Church, no longer content with voicing its message via the traditional political machinery. Attempts by this growing minority to respond and relate directly to the Colombian people also signals a different approach from those choosing violence as a means to fulfilling their goals. The personnel make-up (the depletion of the priestly ranks and the changing clerical class structure) also is contributing to a revamping of the hierarchical structure.

In spite of some anti-clerical regimes in the 19th century, the religious dominance of the Catholic Church in
Colombia was never threatened. To be sure, the Constitution of 1886 and the Concordat of the following year secured the Church's religious monopoly. However, the 20th century ushered into Latin America new trends and movements, challenging the authority of the Church. Protestantism, in particular, appeared so threatening that not only the Church, but its supportive political system, literally attacked it. The ecumenical attitude of Pope John XXIII and a realization that Protestant inroads could best be fought at the grassroots level, have helped to shift the clerical attack away from the violent front. In addition, the modernization of Colombia has had an enormous effect on the Church. Rather than back away from technological advancements, the Church has taken full advantage of them. For instance, the development of mass media networks has been a major source for disseminating Church positions and policies. In this way, the Church has been able to effectively counter threats, such as Protestant conversions among the Colombian people.

The Church response to a changing environment is a contemporary and perhaps more exciting and hopeful way of viewing the Church. The altered political environment resulting from the formation of the National Front calls to mind some of the implications we noted earlier concerning Christian Democracy. We conjecture that one result of Christian Democracy was to remove the Church directly from politics.\(^{33}\)

\(^{33}\)See Chapter I of this thesis, p. 32.
Similarly, in Colombia, the Church was effectively released from political activity because "it gained the support of both the Liberal and Conservative parties,"\(^3^4\) thereby negating its reason for partisanship. The emerging social, pastoral-oriented minority of clergy is clearly a response to changing societal demands and needs.

Adaptation

After reviewing these five "faces," it is obvious that no single perspective adequately serves as a general framework, forming a clear image of the Colombian Church. There is a need for a broader overview, if we are to fully comprehend the posture of the Church in Colombia. The all-encompassing theme of adaptation, which was suggested in the first chapter, serves to illustrate how and why the Church has been able to endure the past 150 years in Colombia. To be sure, the most remarkable aspect of the Church in many Latin American nations is its ability to persist in the most turbulent of political, social, or economic climates.

From a pragmatic standpoint, the chief concern of the Church is to survive and to maintain its authoritative position in society. Of course, the ultimate concern of the Church is to spread the message of Christianity. With this basic premise at hand, the actions and attitudes of the Colombian

\(^3^4\)Corr, p. 65.
Church through history become understandable. For example, during the independence period, the Church transferred its loyalties from Spain to those in Colombia who were willing to support it. This action planted the seeds of partisanship between the Church and the Liberal Party. It also signalled the politically conservative, elitist posture which the Church would adopt for the future. When the traditional political loyalties proved no longer satisfactory or necessary, the Church sought support from other sources of power and influence. This is certainly one way of interpreting the currently shifting Church posture vis-a-vis social reform. "Undoubtedly the new outlook represents the adaptation of a basically conservative institution to conditions challenging its survival."

As we noted previously, the Church is slow to move in new directions. Stimulus from Rome, particularly since the ecumenical era forged by Pope John XXIII, is frequently noted as attributing to the initial signs of a new spirit in the Colombian Church. Changing class loyalties among clergy have also contributed to new attitudes within the Church. The trend toward more middle class men seeking religion as a vocation has signalled a shift away from ties to the elite of Colombian society. The threat of Protestantism and other movements siphoning off some of the Church's mass support has led the Church to confront this challenge by instituting new and constructive programs on the grass-roots level.

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35 Dix, p. 316.
The response by the Church to the Rojas Pinilla regime is yet another example of its basic inclination to survive. When Rojas declared his intention to extend his rule, implying that he did not need the Church to further legitimate his actions, the Church threw its support behind his opposition. Yet, the fact that it waited to the final moment to shift its support, points to the overly cautious nature of the Church.

The relationship between the Church and Rojas Pinilla highlights an additional aspect of Church-State relations. The clerical institution wants to act as a legitimator, as a source of support. In addition, in a subtle way, it points to the ruling authority's need for something or someone with authority to publicly approve of its tenure and actions.

We can identify numerous examples from Church history in Colombia where its actions were rooted in its desire and need to survive. In continuing with this line of thought, we can generalize about the Church's means to persisting. In just about every case, the Church has adapted its policies or actions or attitudes to maintain its societal position. It has rarely taken the initiative, but has acted as the follower. In fact, the Church has often found itself legitimating action begun by others. This role is not to be interpreted as accidental, for it benefits the privileged position of the Church to act as a legitimator as opposed to an initiator of social and political change.
CHAPTER III
THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN CHILE

The Chilean Church is considered by many to be the most reform-oriented, progressive Church in Latin America.\(^1\) However, when judging the conservative/liberal posture of the Church, the Chilean masses work from a different perspective. Their yardstick in determining the political inclinations of the Chilean Church is other institutions within the Chilean state. According to this framework, dating back to the independence period, we can observe a Church with a varied political history, identified with groups having both conservative and liberal leanings.

For most of the 1800's, the political climate in Chile was similar to that of many other Latin American countries. Two parties, Conservative and Liberal, were vying for political power. Generally speaking, the Conservative Party was associated with the pro-clerical movement. The Liberals sought separation of Church and State and the confinement of Church concerns to the religious sphere. The chief political activity of the Church, in these times, was centered on its opposition to the ideals and goals of the Liberal Party and the ascension of the Conservative Party to governmental rule.

We can observe the 19th and early 20th century from the viewpoint of the gradual separation of Church and State and the waning of clerical political authority. By the time the Church was officially disestablished from the State in 1925, a considerable shift had occurred with regard to the perceived role of the Church in Chilean society. Roughly from the late 1920's to the present, the reformist, progressive wing of the Chilean Church has gradually become the dominant force within the clerical institution. As a result of this, the Church has acted as the legitimator of actions initiated by the more liberal-minded political leaders.

The progressive posture of the Catholic Church in Chile today is unique, particularly when it is compared to other Latin American churches. The following examination, however, will not focus on such a comparative study, but will attempt to analyze this curious phenomenon within the context of Chilean history. The political directions of the Chilean government, changing social attitudes, and the dynamics of internal/external forces working upon the Church have all contributed over the years to shape the Chilean Catholic Church into an institution supportive of progressive policies and actions. Of particular interest in Chilean clerical history are such points as: the effect of "freedom of religion" on the Catholic Church, the continual growth of Protestantism, the influence of papal directives, the role of the Church with regard to Christian Democracy, and the relationship between the Church and military rule.
In the following study, we will focus on that point in Chilean history when the Church began to evolve into a progressive institution. A more intensive examination will detail the longevity, direction, and implications of the transition.

Though the 19th century will not be examined in such close scrutiny, we will identify those elements in early Church history which point to the change in the Chilean Church of the 20th century. Certain elements will be studied because they constitute either a common response among Latin American churches or are unique to the Chilean experience.

As in the previous case study, the 20th century Church will be highlighted in this section. The official year of separation of Church and State in 1925 is the key. This date not only marks the climax of changing societal attitudes concerning the Catholic Church, but it also signals the beginning of new directions within the Chilean Church.

Church History

During the independence era, strong feelings were prevalent among Chileans as to the place of the Church in society. In fact, little divided the Liberal from the Conservative Party other than the issues of education and religion. Regardless of which party was in power, the Church was graced with favored treatment in the early years. The Constitution of 1818 denied freedom of religion to other faiths and assumed
governmental guardianship of the Roman Catholic Church. Despite Liberal rule from 1823 to 1830, the various state constitutions which were ratified during this time, shared similar policies of supporting the role of the Catholic Church in Chilean society.\(^2\) Even in the somewhat religiously liberal Constitution of 1828, the Church retained its favored status while public observance of other religions was declared illegal.\(^3\)

However, it is important to note that the Catholic religion was never wholly embraced by the Chilean government. We can sense a tendency for religious toleration by the government even at this early stage of statehood. For instance, the Constitution of 1828, approved during the Freire regime, sanctioned the private worship of other faiths.\(^4\) These initial inclinations toward toleration mark the beginning of greater openness among the Chilean masses toward minority faiths. This undercurrent continued to grow throughout the 1800's, eventually culminating in the separation of Church and State. Not only were the rumblings of religious toleration


\(^4\)Lloyd Mecham, p. 206.
being felt in the early to mid 1800's, but the "domination of the Church and the religious spirit of Chileans were gradually waning." In the 1840's, a daily newspaper, El Mercurio, spoke out for religious toleration. In several instances, on public occasions, the government exercised restraint in their deference to high clerical personages. Though these changes may seem insignificant, they were indicative of the general drift of public opinion.

Obviously, it was very difficult for the Church to confront any pervasive shift in the public attitude toward the Church. However, it could effectively and vigorously attach individual actions, such as the newspaper's pronouncements on religious freedom. In response to El Mercurio, the Church "produced a great scandal and under the protection of the Archbishop, LaRevista Catolica (The Catholic Review) was founded to undertake the defense of the Church, threatened by the movement, subversive to its dogma, which appeared to be breaking out among the intellectual youth of the period."

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5Ibid., p. 209.


7Luis Galdames, p. 284.

8Lloyd Mecham, p. 209.

9Louis Galdames, p. 284.
The balance of the 1800's, up through the rule of Balmaceda in the late 1880's, was marked by attempts to legislate religious freedom and the disassociation of Church and State. The mid to latter 1800's were the testing grounds for the spread of Protestantism and the secularization of Chilean society. Coincidentally, the Liberals administered the government from 1861 to 1891 forging, via legislation, a comparatively "liberal" government.

Ironically, even when Conservatives were in power, the clergy were restrained by the government.\(^{10}\) In the mid 1800's, three acts were passed which, in effect, thrust the State into a watchdog position. For example, the government had the right to make certain that curates fulfilled their responsibilities.\(^{11}\) During the second term of Montt in the 1850's, the President was accused by the Church of actually interfering in its internal affairs by overruling the decision of an ecclesiastical tribunal.\(^{12}\) The higher clergy not only objected to this aggressive governmental behavior, but found that internal dissension over such issues weakened the ability of the Church to effectively confront them.

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\(^{10}\) Lloyd Mecham, p. 208.

\(^{11}\) Ibid.

\(^{12}\) James Petras, p. 89.
Religious toleration was practiced to some extent by the Chilean government prior to any legislation. For example, in 1847, when the Protestant Union Church organized and built a structure as its house of worship, the government did not interfere. "The constitutional phrase 'public exercise' was generally regarded as not prohibiting religious worship of non-Catholics inside buildings." 13 Such governmental attitudes were forged into law in 1865 when the Congress adopted the Ley Interpretation, attempting to insure religious freedom. Though a constitutional amendment to this effect failed congressional ratification, the fact remained that limited religious freedom had been publicly recognized.

The early 1870's was a crucial period, not only for the status of the Church in Chile but also for the coalition government. At that time, the so-called four "theological questions" were being considered by those in power:

1. the suppression of ecclesiastical privilege
2. the secularization of cemeteries
3. civil marriages
4. separation of Church and State.

Because the passage of legislation settling these issues would severely challenge the status of the Church, the governmental coalition of Liberals and Conservatives fought bitterly. Two moderate reform measures finally were approved: the

13 Lloyd Mecham, p. 207.
clergy were to be judged by civil courts and certain areas of Catholic cemeteries were to be opened to other faiths. (Even these reforms were only passed after the Conservatives were ousted from the government.) Reforms affecting civil marriages and separation of Church and State were not authorized at this time, although the Liberal forces within the government were intent upon eventually enacting these two programs.

The clergy violently objected to the two moderate measures passed by the government and they did not hesitate to speak out in many public forums. Clerical objections proved to be effective in the sense that the government failed to pass an extensive clerical reform program. On the other hand, "the reformas teológicas seriously weakened the Chilean Church; in a formal encounter it had been defeated and humiliated; its prestige was shaken and thereafter it was placed on the defensive."  

However, during the presidency of Domingo Santa María (1881-1886) cemeteries were completely removed from the control of the Church and civil marriages were legalized. In response, the Church aggressively opposed these reforms. Concerning the civil marriage law, the clergy vigorously protested and even threatened to refrain from officiating at the marriage

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14 Luis Galdames, p. 317.

15 Lloyd Mecham, p. 215.
of anyone who had supported the governmental policy.\textsuperscript{16} They so severely condemned the secularization of the cemeteries that governmental authorities temporarily closed some Catholic cemeteries.\textsuperscript{17}

Perhaps the most symbolic blow to the status of the Church was in the realm of education. In Chile, as in most other Latin American nations, the position of the Church in society has been buttressed by its control of education. "The effective weakening of the [Chilean] Church was symbolized by the measure of 1879, which made religious instruction in the public schools no longer obligatory."\textsuperscript{18}

With the passage of these various reform measures, the clerical vs. anti-clerical split becamse quiescent.\textsuperscript{19} By the late 1880's, essentially no real barries existed between the Liberal and Conservative Parties, save the formal separation of Church and State. However, the manner in which separation would be attained and the extent of separation was to bewilder the Chilean government, clerical institution and people for another thirty years. But those who sought the

\textsuperscript{16}Ibid., p. 213.

\textsuperscript{17}Ibid.


\textsuperscript{19}James Petras., p. 89.
disestablishment of the Roman Catholic Church were determined, as was indicated by the Minister of the Interior near the end of the 19th century: "Between the partisans of definite and immediate separation of Church and State, and the partisans of gradual and progressive separation, there is no difference of doctrine. There's only a difference of procedure. We will advance step by step with perfect security and we propose to arrive at the goal." 20

The transition between the enactment of the reform measures and the legal separation of Church and State in 1925 is an interesting period in Chilean Church history. Paradoxically, the Church violently opposed the reform measures of the 1800's, yet passively, even with some optimism, accepted the separation in the 1900's. The explanation for this radical change in behavior can be found by studying the Church and society in the intervening years of the "transition" period.

Prior to this time, the state had had poor relations with the Papacy. After some altercations with the Pope over the state's choice for filling a vacant archbishopric, the state assumed patronage over the Church. During the Balmaceda rule, in the late 1880's, the President attempted to assuage the wounded Church by reestablishing state relations with the Vatican.

20 Lloyd Meehan, p. 215.
The position which had remained vacant was filled by a cleric who was interested in easing Church-State relations. In 1895, Archbishop Mariano Casanova called a diocesan synod which focused on the internal organization of the national Church. In 1905, he convened a solemn eucharistic congress, where religious dogmas were reaffirmed. Some important events occurred at this congress which were to affect the position of the Church with regard to the State in the future.

A Catholic University in Santiago and various schools and colleges were founded. These acts helped vitalize the Church because it gave the clerical institution the opportunity to educate young men in a religious environment. Also, an appeal was made to the working class to join Catholic labor associations, supervised by clerics. Justification for such actions of Christian socialism was founded in the contemporary encyclicals of Pope Leo XIII.

These initial, but crucial, undertakings signalled the beginning of a different and dynamic relationship between the Church and the Chilean people and the State. Observers often characterize this period as a time of marked religious

\[21\] Luis Galdames, p. 430.
\[22\] Ibid.
\[23\] Ibid., p. 431.
\[24\] Ibid.
evolution. Apparently, a shift in societal attitudes regarding the Catholic Church also developed in Chile at this time. A general religious indifference and tolerance came over the people. (This is not to say that they were leaving the Church or that Protestantism was directly challenging Roman Catholic religious authority.) This was evidenced by a relaxation in the observance of Catholic rituals and fewer number of people attending Mass. Even the political orientation of many clergy was waning. The type of priest who had been directly involved in the political controversy over the theological questions was less visible.

Ironically, the Church in this period has also been noted for nurturing the respect and allegiance of the people, which it had lost over political battles in the late 1800's. Apparently, this developed because the Church was gradually moving away from the political sphere and confining itself to the "religious" domain and to constructive social activity. Some observers charge that the Church finally learned the value of keeping above politics and away from any direct political involvement.

These characteristics of the period and of the Church help describe the environment in which separation occurred.

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25 Lloyd Mecham, p. 217; Luis Galdames, pp. 429-430.
26 Luis Galdames, p. 430.
27 Luis Galdames, p. 430; Ivan Vallier, p. 158.
Also significant was the transfer of governmental power to the Radical and Democratic Parties in 1920. The Radical Party in particular, had a history of promoting anti-clerical policies. According to newly-elected President Allessandri, "When ministers become affiliated with political groups, they compromise the sacred interests of their charge. The future of the Church, the most precious interests of religion, are then tied up to the fortunes of a party."\(^2^8\)

The sense of this statement was written into the Constitution of 1925. Basically, the new Constitution voided all previous laws concerning Church-State relations. Church property acquired before the 1925 Constitution was to remain in the hands of the religious institution, and the government agreed to subsidize the Church for a brief period of time for the loss of its many privileges.\(^2^9\) The Church no longer controlled the educational system, although it was permitted to establish and maintain its own schools. "The Chilean Constitution thus effectively freed the Church of political constraints, and set the stage (largely unexpectedly) for its revitalization into what is today one of Latin America's most progressive Churches."\(^3^0\)

\(^2^8\)Lloyd Mecham, p. 218.


Surprisingly, very few protests among clergy or laymen were voiced in 1925.\textsuperscript{31} Apparently, the clergy either realized that it would have been futile to contest such governmental efforts or that they believed such action was beneficial. In any case, the government's position was made easier when, in 1922, the Primate of Chile, Archbishop Errazuriz of Santiago declared that "the Church is not responsible for the actions of any political party, nor does it attempt to influence them, leaving them completely independent."\textsuperscript{32} Remarkably, Chile resolved the Church State controversy without bloodshed and in a spirit of marked fellowship on all sides.\textsuperscript{33}

Following the disassociation of Church and State in Chile, Catholicism did not decline as many Conservatives and clerics had predicted. To the contrary, the prestige and authority of the Roman Catholic Church seemed to grow.\textsuperscript{34} Some unique and far-reaching trends did develop after the disestablishment of the Catholic Church. Legal guarantees of religious freedom created a favorable climate for the growth of Protestantism. Clerics with more liberal, socially-oriented ideologies actively sought recognition. Two Jesuits, Fernando Vives del Solar and Jorge Fernandez Pradel, "founded

\textsuperscript{31}Luis Galdames, p. 430.


\textsuperscript{33}Lloyd Mecham, p. 219.

\textsuperscript{34}Ibid., p. 222.
labor unions and credit, housing, and consumers' cooperatives and at the same time spread Catholic social doctrine among the students of Santiago's Catholic University."35 In conjunction with these activities, they introduced the literature of European Christian Social Movements to many Chilean students.

There were a number of bishops who wanted to reestablish ties with the Conservative Party. They reacted to the "subversive" activities of these two Jesuits and the movement they were initiating. However, the influence of the progressive Jesuits was crucial in securing the favor of the Papacy to thwart the bishops' efforts. The Vatican Secretary of State "settled the matter once and for all by reiterating the prohibition of party activities by clergymen and by again stressing that no political party could claim the right to exclusive representation of the Catholics."36

The events of the 1920's and early 1930's set the stage for three major developments affecting the Roman Catholic Church: the growth of Protestantism, the development of a reform-oriented posture within the Church, and the rise of Christian Democracy in Chile.

The effective approval of freedom of religion in 1925 paved the way for the growth of Protestantism. Even prior to

35Ernst Halperin, p. 179.

36Ibid., pp. 181-182.
this official act, Protestant sects had secured a foothold in Chile, as we noted earlier. However, since the secularization of the Chilean State, they have made substantial gains—so much so, that by the mid-20th century, 10.8% of the Chilean people could be identified as belonging to a Protestant sect, \(^3\!^7\) the highest percentage of Protestants in any Latin American country.

This relatively high percentage has caused legitimate fears among Catholics about the susceptibility of Chileans to Protestantism. The threat of Protestantism and the fact that they have made inroads in Catholic territory, especially in the lower classes where the Church has been traditionally weak, has been one major reason for the emergence of reform-oriented priests.

This brings us to the next development: the rise of progressive priests within the clerical ranks. The separation of Church and State and the various statements on neutrality seem to have had the effect of drawing out the diverse viewpoints among the clergy. The most prevalent viewpoint is that of the progressive clergy. Their programs have also been the most effective in confronting Protestantism and the ideological movements of the Left (Socialism and Communism).

\(^3\!^7\)Lloyd Mecham, p. 222.
Other events have occurred which have shaped the progressive posture of the Chilean Church. Roughly from 1929 to World War II, a select group of reform-oriented clergy emerged within the Chilean Church, confronting the conservative hierarchy. They initiated programs and sparked the interest of students and Chileans outside of the hierarchical structure, inspiring a leftist political movement of Catholic laymen, prefiguring the Christian Democratic Party.\(^3^8\) Several episcopal appointments within the Chilean Church since the late 1930's also have assured the institution of progressive leadership. Between 1955 and 1964, the Church collected a corps of clerical and lay experts from within Chile and in Europe to help redirect its programs.\(^3^9\)

As a prime example of reform-oriented efforts to reach the people and respond to their needs, we can cite the Catholic Action Program. On a local level, bishops have sponsored lay organizations in an attempt to stimulate a militant enthusiasm for spreading the spiritual message and influence of the Church.\(^4^0\) Perhaps it has had the greatest impact at the ideological level. Catholic Action programs have "generated a reform-oriented social Catholicism that has played a key role in the Christian Democratic political

\(^3^8\) Ivan Vallier, pp. 145-146.

\(^3^9\) Ibid.

\(^4^0\) Ibid., p. 2.
movements. It was decisive in Chile for turning a certain number of Catholic youth away from the coalition that the Church held with the Conservative party. Moreover, it stimulated laymen to see political action as their responsibility, rather than that of Church officials."

There have been additional indications that the Chilean Church has been pointed in a progressive direction by its own clergy. Archbishops Crescente Errazuriz and Jose Caro Rodriquez, after the 1925 separation, both encouraged greater social consciousness among the clergy and supported the message of Pope Leo XIII's Rerum Novarum. Manuel Larrain, the Bishop of Talca, has been a particularly strong supporter of the reform-oriented goals of the progressive clergy. In fact, he set a precedent among Chilean clergy by transferring Church property to tenants. In the spirit of this action, for instance, in 1961, Chilean bishops decided to sell 13,200 acres of ecclesiastical property to a number of Chilean families. The Institute for Agricultural Development was also organized at that time to oversee the distribution of the land. The Bishop has advanced the Institute of Rural Education, which was developed in the mid 1950's so as to promote the training of Chilean youth in agriculture and mechanics.

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41 Ibid., p. 65.
42 Lloyd Mecham, p. 33
43 Ivan Vallier, p. 64.
He has also stepped outside of the bounds of the Chilean hierarchy to advance social reform as the President of CELAM, the Latin American organization of progressive bishops.

The inclusion of Catholic laymen in the clerical administrative sphere has had a favorable impact on the Church reform movement. The trend to draw laymen into the decision-making process has freed the bishops from some of their administrative duties, encouraging the more progressive members to leave their episcopal residences and establish closer ties with the marginal peoples in poorer districts.\textsuperscript{44}

To be sure, with the emergence of reformist lay groups and activist students, the ecclesiastical establishment has been less and less "political." Oftentimes, the Church acts politically, though indirectly, through Catholic lay groups. Many of these groups have gained prominence, enough to win victories in the political arena with the best interests of the Church in mind. For instance, they have secured substantial state subsidies for private educational institutions and Catholic universities have been authorized to grant degrees of comparable value to those awarded by secular universities. "The practical monopoly of the Radical Party over the educational system was broken largely by the ability and dynamism of Catholic teacher and student groups."\textsuperscript{45}

\textsuperscript{44}Ibid., p. 136.

\textsuperscript{45}Federico Gil, p. 296.
This leads us into a discussion of the third major development affecting the Church: the rise of Christian Democracy. "The victory of this new party, although not necessarily a result of Church action, was nevertheless in harmony with a new trend in Catholic policy in Chile."\textsuperscript{46} Much like the effect of Catholic lay groups acting on the behalf of the Church in the political arena and backed by Church influence and authority, the Christian Democratic Movement has had a significant impact on removing the Church from politics.

Ivan Vallier has advanced this particular theory, suggesting that,

Catholic reform parties like Christian Democracy can play a latent role in helping to institutionalize a progressively oriented but non-political Church as well as providing political arenas for Catholic laymen who opt for a progressive political type of worldly action but still want to remain involved in the Church. Strong and progressive Christian Democratic parties serve a twofold function under these circumstances:

1) they act as a buffer between the Church and the political arena;

2) they serve as a safety valve by providing a meaningful political arena for laymen who maintain Catholic orientations but pursue a politics of reform and change. \textsuperscript{47}

\textsuperscript{46}Lloyd Mecham, p. 223.

\textsuperscript{47}Ivan Vallier, p. 92.
Prior to an examination of this theory, in light of the Chilean Christian Democratic Party and the Catholic Church, we will briefly trace the development of the movement in Chile and its relationship with the clerical institution.

The Christian Democratic Party was founded in the mid 1930's by a group of Catholic University students who had broken away from the Conservative Party. They had organized in an attempt "to revitalize and increase the popular appeal of the Conservative Party. But in order to do so, they advocated policies that threatened the interests of the oligarchy and profoundly antagonized the party leadership." Their program of social reform began to gain national prominence after the Popular Front, a coalition of several middle-of-the-road and left-wing parties, consolidated power in 1938. We noted earlier the two Jesuit priests, Fernando Vives del Solar and Jorge Fernandez Pradel and their efforts to instill the message of European social movements in Chilean students. Their actions have also been credited by some for establishing the environment in which the Christian Democratic Movement initially emerged and for severing the Church's ties with the Conservative Party.

Most observers agree that the Catholic Church is the inspiration behind the emergence of Christian Democracy. The link between the two is based on the influence and spirit of

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4.8 Ernst Halperin, p. 179.
4.9 Ibid., p. 181.
the papal encyclicals since Pope Leo XIII issued Rerum Novarum in 1891. "In fact, it might be said that the entire Christian Democratic Movement dates from the publication of that revolutionary document, although three subsequent encyclicals have also made major contributions to the movement."  

The Christian Democratic Party in Chile has certainly benefited from its identification with Catholic thought and from the new progressive image of the clerical hierarchy. In taking full advantage, the Party openly promised in the 1950's to redirect Chile according to the philosophies expressed in the papal directives from Pope Leo XIII's Rerum Novarum to the teachings of Pope Pius XI.  

In addition, the Christian base of Chilean society has offered an established recruiting pool for the party. Curiously, it is at this level that the linkage between the Party and the Church is severed.

Leaders of Christian Democracy have attempted to refute the common charge that they are a Church-directed party, by indicating that they recognize religious pluralism as a mainstay of Chilean society. They claim that the Church in

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52 Edward Williams, p. 168.

53 Federico Gil, p. 269.
no way directs their policies or expects the party's allegiance. This is somewhat confirmed by the fact that the Church as an institution has never publicly/officially supported Christian Democracy. However, the fact that the party draws its basic philosophy from papal encyclicals and maintains individual support from progressive priests, is in apparent conflict with the Party's position of non-confessionality.

Rather than take away from the growth of the party, the confusion over the "Catholicism" of Christian Democracy served to strengthen the Party through the mid 1960's. The Party was increasing its membership with those Chileans who believed in its progressive, humanistic policies and also with those who believed it to be the Catholic Party. Christian Democracy was drawing on the membership of those pro-clerical and centrist parties who in the past, had relied on Church backing.

The Christian Democratic Movement attained political maturity in the 1958 election when it gained national stature under the leadership of Eduardo Frei. Its defeat in this election was significant. The Conservatives edged out the leftist coalition, whose candidate was Salvador Allende, by a mere 33,500 votes. By the 1964 elections, the only serious contenders for the presidency were Frei and Allende.

Ibid., p. 82.
Fearing that Allende and his leftist coalition would win, especially in light of their near-success in the 1958 election, the conservative coalition lent its support to Frei. Frei won easily with 56.1% of the vote as opposed to Allende's 38.9%.

The backing by the conservatives falls short of fully explaining the Christian Democratic victory of 1964. The Catholic Church feared a socialist or left-wing government. In fact, one author claims that the Church was so perturbed over the possibility of an Allende victory, that they petitioned the Jesuit General in Rome to send social scientists to Chile to help defeat Allende. Roger Vekemans, a Belgian Jesuit, helped design a series of programs to aid Frei in his candidacy. It has been charged that his programs were funded by West German aid agencies and the CIA.

There is another factor essential to the Christian Democratic success: the influence of the female vote. The unofficial, but active support of the Frei candidacy by the Church influenced and attracted many of the women voters. It is an accepted fact that the Roman Catholic Church has an indomitable hold over women positioned on all rungs of the

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55 Gary MacEoin, p. 49.

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid.
economic ladder.\(^5^8\) Over half of the Frei vote was cast by women.\(^5^9\)

When Frei took office, he found that the Christian Democratic Party did not constitute a majority in the Chilean Senate. He was therefore encouraged to remain open to the Communist Party, which held critical seats in the Senate.\(^6^0\)

Interestingly enough, this did not upset the relationship between the Frei regime and the Catholic Church. This shift in clerical attitudes can be traced back to the effects of Vatican II, beginning in 1962 and to the progressive nature of the Chilean hierarchy.

The spirit and ecumenical message of Vatican II were supported by the progressive clergy in Chile, as well as clerics in other Latin American nations. This was indicated particularly in Chile, by a number of clerical actions. Concrete programs were institutionalized: "technical training for campesinos, distribution of Church lands to underprivileged groups, forming of credit and production cooperatives in some callampus."\(^6^1\)

\(^{58}\) Edward Williams, pp. 275-276.

\(^{59}\) Ibid., p. 277.


The extent of the changing clerical attitudes was revealed at the Medellin Conference in Colombia in 1968, attended by Latin American bishops. The meeting was opened by Pope Paul and his progressive message was a call for volunteers to help construct a new order.\(^6\)\(^2\)

The bishops closed the conference with a message stressing the Church's withdrawal from its traditional political activities and its involvement in the social and economic needs of the marginal masses.\(^6\)\(^3\) An interesting by-product of this message was the move toward conciliation and cooperation by some clergy with communist and socialist movements.

This is not to imply that there was a massive shift of allegiance amongst clergy or laymen to leftist parties. Though Allende was the victor in the 1970 election, it should be noted that his percentage of the vote decreased relative to the 1964 election. (He received 38.9% of the vote in 1964 and 36.6% in 1970.)\(^6\)\(^4\) The key to the 1970 victory was the re-emergence of the split between Christian Democrats and Conservatives.

However, there was a minority of clergy who supported Allende because they were frustrated with the slow progress

\(^6\)\(^2\)Gary MacEoin, p. 16.

\(^6\)\(^3\)Ibid., p. 60

of Christian Democracy. Even though they failed to win the support of the full hierarchy, they backed Allende and consequently gained prominence with the ascendancy of his regime. In 1971, a group of eighty Roman Catholic priests urged Christians to renounce Christian Democracy and lend their support to "the revolutionary process." And in 1972, "400 Latin American priests and laymen ended a week-long conference of 'Christians for Socialism' in Santiago (May 2) with a call for a 'Strategic alliance between revolutionary Christians and Marxists for the liberation of the continent.'"  

The Vatican and the Chilean hierarchy disapproved of the public support extended to specific political movements. They continued to profess a belief in the withdrawal of the Church from the political sphere. This is not to say that the Church could not persist under a radical form of government. To be sure, the clerical institution had little difficulty living with and working under the Allende government. In fact, at their annual meeting in 1973, the Chilean bishops indicated their approval of the overall policies of the progressive government.  

The only major issue which aroused Church opposition during the Allende presidency was a proposal for school

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66 Gary MacEoin, p. 142.
reform which "would establish the National Unified School (ENU), whose general purpose would be to replace the current 'scientific-humanist' curriculum with a 'polytechnic and general' one."\(^6\)\(^7\) Recognizing that Church-related schools would be adversely affected, the hierarchy vigorously rejected this proposal. Their opposition played a major role in Allende's decision not to proceed with the education reform measure.\(^6\)\(^8\)

As we have previously indicated, though the Church hierarchy has refrained from making political commitments and from disapproving of certain forms of governments, the Church can nevertheless live under a variety of regimes. However, when it comes to the matter of Church survival, there has traditionally been very little room to compromise. This is aptly illustrated in the Church's response to the Pinochet regime.

Catholic spokesmen initially said, "The Church is not called on to form governments or to overthrow them, to recognize them or not to recognize them. We accept the government which these people have chosen to give themselves and we serve it."\(^6\)\(^9\) However, as the Junta stepped up its repressive

\(^{67}\)Lester Sobel, p. 124.

\(^{68}\)Ibid., p. 123.

\(^{69}\)Gary MacEoin, p. 173.
acts, especially its arrests, expulsions, and even killings of Catholic priests, the Church became alarmed.

At first, the Church hierarchy, under the leadership of Raul Cardinal Silva Henriquez, publicly made excuses for the Junta and overlooked many of its abuses. But criticism fast emerged from the lower ranks of the clergy. A committee sponsored by Roman Catholic, Protestant and Jewish religious leaders reportedly prepared a document charging the Junta with brutal acts of torture. The Church review, "Mensage, founded by Jesuits, asserted that 'force' would not enable Chileans to build a 'fatherland' where 'justice and brotherhood exist not only in speeches but in actions.'" 70 By eight months after the coup, the Roman Catholic hierarchy was sharply criticizing the Pinochet regime. The Catholic Church publicly declared its opposition to the economic policies of the Pinochet regime and the pervasive political repression and violence. 71 The Junta was turning equally hostile toward the Church. An Air Force commander, exemplifying the regime's disdain for the Church, commented, "I have great respect for the Church, but like many men, without realizing it, they are vehicles for Marxism." 72 The ultimate irony in this statement may very well be the fact that in repressing this slowly

70 Lester Sobel, pp. 169-170.
71 Ibid., p. 171.
72 Ibid.
evolving leftist tendency among the Chilean masses, the Pinochet regime itself may be unwittingly leading Chile to more radical, leftist social change.

Five Faces of the Church

The Roman Catholic Church in Chile has been examined up to this point from an historical perspective. The remainder of this case study will discuss the clerical institution from different vantage points: the Church-State approach, Papal-Church relations, hierarchical structure, new trends in Chile and Church response.

Church-State relations in Chile can best be understood if we consider their association before and after the reform measures enacted by the government in the late 1800's. Prior to these acts, an antagonistic relationship existed between Church and State. The tension between the two was appropriate, as far as the Church was concerned, since the state was trying to retrieve the secular powers and influence which the Church had deemed necessary to maintain its position in society. Following this period, Church-State relations for the most part, eased substantially. In fact, severe conflict has only erupted since that time with the military coup of 1973.

In light of this historical division, we can also discuss the political tendencies of the Church in these two periods. For most of the 19th century, the Church behaved as a conservative institution, acting in direct opposition to
the progressively liberal regimes. During the 20th century, the Chilean Church has become so reform-oriented (particularly in view of its earlier stature) that it has been duly stamped the most progressive Church in Latin America.

The influence of the Papacy has played a significant role in the history of the Chilean Church. It is certainly no coincidence that at approximately the same time that Pope Leo XIII delivered his Rerum Novarum, the Chilean hierarchy began to change its attitude concerning the role of the Church in society. Since that time, the progressive tendency of the Chilean Church has been given momentum by various Papal actions. A prime example of such support can be identified after the separation of 1925 when the powers in Rome intervened in the controversy on the side of the progressive clergy, confirming the necessity for Church political neutrality. Again, the tendencies of the progressive Chilean clergy were confirmed by Pope Paul's message at the Medellin Conference in 1968. The Chilean hierarchy has not been slow to follow the lead of Papal directives, as have other Latin American Churches.

The apparent unanimity among Chilean clergy presents us with the image of a monolithic Church. In fact, in the case of Chile, it is difficult to consider the Church hierarchy as a fragmented body. To be sure, "the relatively small number of bishops and their frequent meetings to deal with common problems have given the Chilean episcopate a unified and progressive character and image that distinguished it from
clerical hierarchies in other Latin American countries. As a small group the bishops have achieved a high degree of friendship and homogeneity that has had an effect on the positions taken by the episcopate." However, if we look back in history, there have been eruptions of discontent within the hierarchy, particularly around the periods of political transitions and upheaval. We are referring here to the clerical dissension exhibited shortly after the disassociation of Church and State and the disaffection with Christian Democracy by the more radical clergy in the late 1960's and early 1970's. David Mutchler points to widespread organizational conflict within the Chilean hierarchy and particularly to dissension within the ranks toward the end of the Christian Democratic regime.

Unlike the Colombian Church, the Catholic Church has not had a firm religious grasp on the people. The tendency for religious toleration, going back to the mid-1800's, is testimony to this fact. So with the introduction of various movements and philosophies in Chile, the Church has been especially fearful of encroachments on its "territory." Particularly in view of the fact that today, Chile has a greater percentage of Protestants than in any other Latin American country, the fear of a Protestant threat is certainly

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valid. 74 The liberal political climate in Chile has also been a cause for concern among Chilean clerics. This was certainly apparent in 1958, when after Allende lost the presidency by a small margin, clerics actively supported Christian Democracy in the 1964 election. The hierarchy has since recognized that their support of anti-leftist policies is counter-productive in the attempt to maintain the loyalties of their following.

The Church has aggressively responded to these developments. It has reacted to Protestantism by creating various grass-roots organizations. These actions are particularly significant in Chile because they represent efforts emanating from all levels of the hierarchy. The Church has attempted to counter the success of radical political parties by unofficially backing another political party, the Christian Democrats. The net effect of this action was, 1) to remove itself from direct contact with the political sphere, and 2) to release its energies so as to concentrate on social programs.

Adaptation

The five "faces" of the Roman Catholic Church in Chile each explain or illustrate different aspects of this particular clerical institution. However, a broader overview serves not

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74 Lloyd Mecham, p. 222.
only to take into account these perspectives, but allows the observer to get a full view of the Church as well. The theory of adaptation, which was presented in the introductory chapter, has this effect of clarifying our perceptions of the Church and then of coordinating them into a unified framework.

This theme is particularly interesting because of a handicap peculiar to the Chilean Church. It is one of the poorer Churches in Latin America in terms of material wealth. Secondly, the Church does not have strong anchorages in the Chilean masses. The fact that the Church has been able to endure, to exhibit considerable influence and to establish progressive, well-organized social programs, sheds some light on its ability to adapt.

Essentially, because the Church has not been able to rely on its wealth nor on the people's religious loyalties, it has had to demonstrate a remarkable degree of flexibility to persist in Chilean society.\textsuperscript{75} This tendency of the Church was aptly illustrated during the transition period prior to and including the separation of Church and State in 1925. The hierarchy had fought throughout the 1800's, opposing any measures leading to an eventual disassociation between Church and State. When this adamant viewpoint was no longer tenable due to massive dissatisfaction with the traditional role of the clerical hierarchy in society, the chameleon-like nature

\textsuperscript{75}Frederick Turner, p. 206.
of the Church in the political and social spheres emerged. The once inflexible position of the Church with regard to its disestablishment from the State was readily altered to accord with the wishes of the Chilean masses. This sensitivity is a direct result of the particular "handicaps" of the Chilean Church.

The Church is not only interested in the means to survival, but also how best its interests can be served. In this light, Church reliance on Christian Democracy as a "buffer" between its policies and direct political involvement was skillful. There became no need prior to the 1964 election to oppose leftist parties in a direct political confrontation. Christian Democratic leaders served this purpose well. In addition, the Church was able to meet its social/pastoral needs and attempt to reach the marginal masses by devoting more time to social programs.

The fact that the Church could support a socialistic regime like Allende's (which it had been preaching against in the 1964 elections) could be interpreted by some as a hypocritical act. These people would find further evidence for this hypothesis in the Church's initially favorable response to the military junta, which overthrew Allende. Perhaps a more consistent view would not pronounce moral dictums on the Church, but rather see the Church in its historical role of adapting to the prevailing views of the Chilean people. For
instance, the former hypothesis cannot easily justify the Church's present opposition to the Pinochet regime.

The theme of adaptation presents a more cohesive, consistent approach to explaining why the Church is refusing to legitimate the political activities of the Pinochet regime. In light of the killing of clergy, the takeover of Catholic universities and schools and the overall political repression of the Chilean people, it is reasonable that the Church has emerged in opposition to the present government. The Chilean Church today is one of the only institutions with the moral authority and the mass support to publicly oppose the Pinochet regime.
CHAPTER IV
CONCLUSION

In the previous chapters, an hypothesis has been presented concerning the political posture of the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America. We have suggested a different way of looking at the religious institution, a perspective which encompasses the five approaches discussed in the introductory section. The theme of adaptation refers to the ability of the Catholic Church to accommodate to a variety of political and social conditions in order to persist as a religious institution. We noted earlier that the Church in Latin America has had to confront varied, often disconcerting situations, like State anti-clerical policies, progressive Papal directives, dissension within the clerical ranks, and new trends and movements in Latin America challenging its status and authority. To adjust to these pressures, and at the same time, to maintain its influential position in Latin society, the Church has exhibited a flexibility and a willingness to compromise.

In order to demonstrate that such an hypothesis is grounded in reality, we have undertaken an examination of actual case studies: The Church in Colombia and Chile. Since the theme of adaptation does not lend itself to short-term study, we have viewed the Church in both countries over a long period of time. For that reason, we chose an historical overview as a means to understanding the theme of adaptation.
We found that the experiences of the Colombian and Chilean Churches were quite similar in the early to mid-19th century. The Church in these two countries grew out of similar beginnings. Spain, throughout Latin America, planted the seeds of Catholicism and nurtured a religious zeal in the people. In these early years of statehood, the Church could be identified as a highly politicized institution, embroiled in the political maneuverings of the parties and the governments in power. The Church often found itself to be the very root of political division within Colombia and Chile. In both countries, the Liberal Parties supported policies to diminish the Church's privileged position in society. Likewise, in both countries, the Church aligned with the Conservative Parties which promoted Church perquisites.

In an attempt to determine the value of "adaptation," we have purposely chosen Colombia and Chile. These countries represent extreme cases of Church adaptability to Latin society. They exemplify two Churches which have persisted in the face of extreme political and social conditions. It is postulated that they have endured, using similar methods of adaptation.

Adaptation is most visible when the situations are the most extreme. For this reason, we have not only chosen two countries which demonstrate extreme cases, but we have applied this theme to extreme situations within each country. We have concentrated on those points in Colombian and Chilean
history in which the most dramatic political stress and change have occurred. As we have indicated before, if we cannot see adaptation work in these cases, it will be near impossible to view it in more moderate ones.

From the late 19th century to the present, the Churches in Colombia and Chile have evolved into very different religious institutions, for various social, political and economic reasons. The key issue which not only demonstrates the Chilean Church's adaptive nature, but which has since marked the sharpest distinction between the Colombian and Chilean Churches, is the legal separation of Church and State in Chile. After the disestablishment of the Church, the religious issue became diffused in Chile. Religion no longer marked the battle lines between political parties. The Church has successfully, since that time, progressed in its social and religious endeavors. The Colombian Church has been hampered by its continued political involvement. (To be sure, consistent with the theme of adaptation, the negative aspects of direct political involvement of the Church are more than offset by the overall strength of the Church in Colombia.) The role of the Catholic Church has never been extinguished as a controversial issue in the political sphere and Colombian elites continue to be divided by religious ideology.

The disestablishment of the Church is an example of a long-range adaptive process of the Church to the particular Latin American society. But as previously mentioned, adaptation
is more pronounced in times of extreme political stress. The Rojas Pinilla regime in Colombia and the Pinochet regime in Chile provide appropriate examples. Each has demonstrated a lack of respect for the Church and a disdain for the religious institution as a legitimator of governmental policies and actions. It is interesting to note that the Churches, though dissimilar in many respects in this period, responded in precisely the same way. Each Church publicly withdrew its support and exercised its moral authority in a call for opposition against the governing powers.

Another example of Church adaptability, though it is not as blatant, is the role of a "buffer" between the Church and politics. The buffer serves at least a two-fold purpose. First, by utilizing the good offices of Christian Democracy or the National Front, the Church could actively oppose Liberal trends without compromising its ability to legitimate governments. Secondly, at the same time, it allowed those Catholics with Liberal tendencies to avoid direct conflict with the Church on political issues. Christian Democracy in Chile and the National Front in Colombia have served this purpose, though the Christian Democratic Party was more effective. The Church responded to the development of these two political forces by withdrawing somewhat from direct political activity and expending more energy on its social and religious programs.
The threat of Protestantism in both countries has elicited somewhat similar adaptive responses. To offset Protestant inroads, both Churches came to realize that Protestantism had to be fought at the grass-roots level. The Catholic Church has since initiated a program of bringing laymen into its organizational structure and in developing social policies focusing on the problems of the masses.

A simplistic view of the relative position of the Church in Chile and Colombia would be that the former is more advanced than the latter. However, this implies only one limb of the evolutionary tree. Such a linear progression overlooks the differing forces acting upon Colombia and Chile as well as the peculiarities of their internal historical developments. Before we can draw any conclusions about the future evolutionary paths of the Colombian and Chilean Churches, a number of points must be understood about their past and present developments. In view of the theme of adaptation, any projection into the future requires an understanding of why the Church can adapt; that is to say, in what ways the Church is unique as a political institution.

The uniqueness of the Church stems from its ability to persist, while other institutions such as political parties and movements, find it very difficult to endure alongside a variety of political structures. More precisely, the Church's ability to adapt to varied political conditions is rooted in the particular role it plays in society. The Catholic Church
is an institution based on religion. Its touchstone is outside of politics. This distinction is what sets the Church apart from other significant political institutions. Ironically, its base in religion provides it with the tools to survive in a highly politicized world.

At this point, we can make a distinction with regard to the facets of the Church which enable it to interact and adjust to the political environment. The religious dogmas of the Church give the religious institution its purpose and its meaning. Because they are strict they provide the Church with an identity. The fact that the Church has rooted its identity in religious dogmas allows it to be more flexible in other ways. Religious doctrines provide the Church with the ability to interpret religious principles in everyday situations. It is in the religious doctrines that the Catholic Church has found room for adaptation, compromise and flexibility.

This is in marked contrast to the nature of political parties and movements. In adapting their political posture, their political ideology and their very identity become lost. Rather than adapting to the political process, they become consumed by it.

The Catholic Church is based in religion. The ultimate threat to the Church is a confrontation or attack on its very identity. The ideologically and religiously based movements in Latin America present such a threat to the Church.
The religious institution's massive reaction to various regimes and movements is, therefore, extreme, not just because the Church is politically threatened, but because characteristics within the opposing force are challenging the identity of the Catholic Church. The belief of the masses in the Church's religious dogmas becomes that much more significant. As long as the masses remain loyal to the ideals of the Catholic Church, its religious stature and moral authority will continue to advance its political influence.
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