

# philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University • Loyola Heights, Quezon City • 1108 Philippines

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*Philippine Studies* vol. 33, no. 2 (1985) 151–163

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Fri June 27 13:30:20 2008

## **The Vatican Instruction and Liberation Theology in the Philippines**

VITALIANO R. GOROSPE, S.J.

Liberation Theology has become one of the controversial issues of the day because of the Vatican "Instruction on Certain Aspects of the Theology of Liberation" from the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (SCDF) dated 6 August and issued on 3 September 1984.<sup>1</sup> This thirty-six-page document was signed by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, Prefect of the SCDF, and approved by Pope John Paul II. Therefore it is part of the "ordinary" teaching of the Church.

In order to clarify the official stand of the Catholic Church on liberation theology (henceforth LT) and to dispel press distortions, the Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines, Archbishop Bruno Torpigliani, gave a press interview on the Vatican document which was published in question-answer format in *Bulletin Today* (9/12-15).<sup>2</sup> Both Jaime Cardinal Sin and the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) through its President, Archbishop Antonio Ll. Mabutias, endorsed the Vatican Instruction as official Church teaching and as providing authoritative guidelines for evaluating theologies of liberation" in the Philippines.<sup>3</sup>

1. SCDF, *Instruction on Certain Aspects of the "Theology of Liberation"* (Vatican City: 1984). Page references in the text are from the original Vatican Polyglot Press, reprinted in Quezon City by Cardinal Bea Institute (CBI), Ateneo de Manila University, 1984.

2. "Liberation Theology," reprinted in *Life Forum* 16/3 & 4 (Sept.-Dec. 1984): 30-35.

3. "Reflections on the Instruction" by Jaime Cardinal Sin is reprinted in *Liberation Theology & The Vatican Document* (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1984), pp. 95-96 (henceforth, *Claretian ed.*). The CBCP response, "Highlights of the Document" is reprinted in *Life Forum*, pp. 36-38.

The Vatican document presents an authentic theology of liberation rooted both in the universal human aspiration for liberation (pp. 5-7) and in the Christian revelation found in Scripture and Church teaching (pp. 7-14; 29-35). "The Gospel of Jesus Christ is a message of freedom and liberation." "Liberation is first and foremost liberation from the radical slavery of sin" from which all other kinds of slavery and situations of injustice derive (p. 3). Human liberation has its roots initially in the Old Testament, but the New Testament offers a greater radicalization of the spiritual requirements of total human liberation, especially in the discourse on the Mount. The Vatican Instruction insists with Pope John Paul II that an authentic liberation must rest on three "indispensable pillars: the truth about Jesus the savior, the truth about the Church, and the truth about man and his dignity" (pp. 14 & 30).

The document also declares the promotion of justice as a constitutive dimension of the witness of the Christian faith. The Church urges Christians to be increasingly "involved in the struggle to promote justice, freedom, and human dignity" (p. 4)—out of a deep and authentic Christian faith and love. The call of the Gospel to justice is addressed to all: pastors, priests, religious, and lay people should work for evangelization and human liberation in union with their bishops and the Church; and theologians should collaborate loyally in a spirit of dialogue with the magisterium (p. 30).

The Vatican document goes further and emphatically confirms the call of the Gospel for a "preferential option for the poor." God is on the side of the poor, not because the poor are better than the rich, but simply because of the mystery of God's love and preference for the poor. It might be well to recall here that Pope John Paul, in his visit to the Philippines in 1980, stressed social justice and a preferential option for the poor.<sup>4</sup> According to a Vatican affairs commentator, "liberation theologians should rejoice that the gist of their message has gotten across to the universal church and that what they have been saying for a decade and a half has now been accepted and orchestrated by the SCDF."<sup>5</sup>

The longest part of the Vatican document is devoted to the

4. *John Paul II in the Philippines: Addresses and Homilies*, ed. P.S. de Achutegui, S.J. (Quezon City: CBI, Ateneo de Manila University, 1981).

5. Peter Hebblethwaite, "Document Warns About Liberation Theology 'Abuses'; Does Not Condemn," *Claretian ed.*, p. 104.

many "theologies of liberation" and warns against "deviations, and risks of deviations damaging to the faith and to Christian living, that are brought about by certain forms of liberation theology which use, in an insufficiently critical manner, concepts borrowed from various currents of Marxist thought" (p. 4). The document states that LT has diverse theoretical and practical manifestations and therefore there is need of critical discernment (p. 7). Some expressions of LT are entirely legitimate, even necessary. Others need to be criticized, critically evaluated. As we shall see, others, both in method and in content, cannot be accepted.

The Vatican document itself admits that it will not treat LT comprehensively and promises that a subsequent document "will detail in positive fashion the great richness of this theme (liberation and freedom) for the doctrine and life of the Church" (p. 4). Agostino Cardinal Casaroli, the Vatican Secretary of State, announced that the coming document would stress the need for social action by the Church (*New York Times*, 28 October 1984). Secondly, the model of LT criticized in the document is at the extreme of the broad spectrum of LT's which range from Christian to Marxist sources. It is simply not true that all that is good comes from the former and everything bad from the latter. All the deviations of questionable forms of LT's noted by the document are lumped together so that the unacceptable Vatican model cannot be found in toto in any single author or book.<sup>6</sup>

### UNACCEPTABLE FORMS OF LIBERATION THEOLOGY

According to the Vatican Instruction, LT originated in Latin America as "a theological pastoral movement" which spread to other countries in the Third World and in certain circles in the

6. Theologian Avery Dulles, "Liberation Theology: Contrasting Types," *America* 22 September 1984, pp. 138-39, is of a different opinion. He has this to say:

"Documents such as this can easily be dismissed as attacks on a phantom heresy. In the present case such a dismissal would be unmerited. Exaggerations, such as those noted, do exist in the writings of some liberation theologians.

The proponents of Latin American liberation theology will doubtless protest that theirs is not the brand condemned. Even so, the warnings here given may not be useless. In the future such theologians may be more careful to distinguish their positions from the errors described. In this way they can contribute to a broad consensus among Christians of different continents regarding the principles of a sound theology of liberation. This could be one of the most significant religious developments of the coming decades." (p. 139)

First World.<sup>7</sup> First of all, LT “refers to a special concern for the poor and the victims of oppression, which in turn begets a commitment to justice” (p. 8). Secondly, “it designates a theological reflection centered on the biblical theme of liberation and freedom” (p. 8).

God’s self-revelation in Jesus Christ comes to man in various historical and cultural settings and so the understanding and expressions of the objective content of the Christian faith will have different emphases, nuances, and imperatives. In other words, many different theologies will arise, each theology expressing the one Christian faith in its own way and perhaps with varying degrees of adequacy.<sup>8</sup> In view of the different concrete situations of oppression and injustice in each country at any given time as well as the level of a people’s faith-life experience, there can be many theologies of liberation.<sup>9</sup>

The SCDF’s exposition of unacceptable expressions or forms of LT can be discussed under four main headings: (1) The uncritical use of Marxist analysis (pp. 17-20); (2) the subversion of the meaning of truth and violence (pp. 20-22); (3) its wrong theological application (pp. 22-24); (4) a new interpretation of Christianity (pp. 15-16, 26-29).

The Vatican Instruction criticizes forms of LT which use Marxist social analysis as if it were the only “scientific” method of analysis for effective social action while failing to make a preliminary critical study of Marxist thought to which this analysis is inextricably tied. A preliminary critique is necessary since Marxism is a global vision of reality whose philosophical and ideological

7. Segundo Galilea, “The Theology of Liberation, A General Survey,” in *Claretian ed.*, pp. 3-51, offers an introductory, balanced, and comprehensive general survey of LT in Latin America.

8. Gabriel Daly, OSA, “Catholic Theology During the Last Two Decades,” *Doctrine and Life* (1984): 52-62, shows how one and the same Christian faith can be expressed by many theologies.

9. T. Howland Sanks, S.J., “Liberation Theology and the Social Gospel: Variations on a Theme,” *Theological Studies* 41 (December 1980): 668-82, explains how LT’s are conditioned by the concrete social context from which they emerged. For the plurality and variety of LT’s, see Alfred T. Hennelly, *Theologies in Conflict: The Challenge of Juan Luis Segundo* (N.Y.: Orbis, 1979) and Dennis P. MacCann, *Christian Realism and Liberation Theology: Practical Theologies in Creative Conflict* (N. Y.: Orbis, 1981). With regard to the evolution of Marxism, one of the most authoritative and scholarly studies is the three volumes of Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, trans. P.S. Falla (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978). A shorter but comprehensive and very readable study is Arthur F. McGovern, *Marxism: An American Christian Perspective* (N.Y.: Orbis, 1980).

structure already predetermines the meaning of the analysis. In other words, Marxist ideology comes before the observation of social reality. The Instruction cites the warning of Pope Paul VI that it would be illusory and dangerous "to accept elements of the Marxist analysis without recognizing its connections with the ideology, or to enter into the practice of class struggle and of its Marxist interpretation while failing to see the kind of totalitarian society to which this process slowly leads" (*Octogesima Adveniens*, n. 34). The Vatican document points to the fundamental errors of Marxist thought which are incompatible with the Christian vision of man and society—"atheism and the denial of the human person, his liberty and his rights" (p. 19); man is subordinated to the state and his human dignity and eternal destiny are denied.

The Vatican document encourages theologians to make use of the analytical methods of the other human and social sciences but they must be critically aware that "it is only in the light of faith, and what faith teaches us about the truth of man and the ultimate meaning of his destiny, that one can judge the validity or degree of validity of what other disciplines propose, often rather conjecturally, as being the truth about man, his history and his destiny" (p. 19). The uncritical use of Marxist analysis can lead to a simplification of the causes of poverty. For instance, one can describe with pathos and in Marxist language the grave structural injustice in Latin America under the guise of being "scientific." Hence, what is needed is total openness to the reality to be analyzed and critical consciousness in adopting Marxist social analysis.

The Vatican Instruction does not condemn the use of Marxist analysis as a sociological tool for analyzing wealth, poverty, and injustice as social realities. Marxist social analysis can be of considerable help because it may ask the right questions without necessarily providing the correct answers to the questions it raises. Moreover, Christians can learn much from Marxist analysis about the roots of Third World poverty; about sensitivity to alienation, exploitation and marginalization; about the fact and importance of class consciousness and struggle in history; about ideologies which camouflage vested interests and injustice; about strategy and organization. But they must be critical and cautious about the Marxist vision, philosophy or ideology, and political praxis. One of the challenges to leadership in the Philippine Church is to develop

from grassroots experience a holistic scientific basis for a sound theological reflection and social action towards radical social transformation.

According to the Vatican document, certain forms of LT which subscribe to the Marxist ideological core—the theory of class struggle based on revolutionary violence—as a “scientific” determining principle and as the sole criterion of truth are unacceptable. “Class struggle in the strict Marxist sense is not the same as ‘severe social conflict’ in an empirical sense” (p. 18). It is the Marxist theory of class struggle, not the fact of social stratification which has been accepted by deviant forms of LT as a “scientific” law of history.

The meaning of truth is subverted. For the Marxist, “there is no truth but the truth in the struggle of the revolutionary class” (p. 21). Since Marxist analysis is inseparable from historical praxis, only those engaged in the struggle can acquire “true consciousness.” Only those who have “true liberated consciousness” of the class struggle and engage in revolutionary praxis can in turn do Marxist analysis correctly. The class struggle is an objective and necessary law of history and is founded on violence—both the violence of the rich, the oppressor and the counterviolence of the poor, the oppressed. Only those who act in accordance with this law, “act scientifically”; only they “make the truth.” In short, the class struggle is the sole criterion of truth and violence is the inevitable law of history. Finally, the universal law of the class struggle is reflected in the religious, ethical, cultural, and institutional spheres and leads to a denial of transcendent moral right and wrong.

The Vatican document, quoting Pope Paul VI, warns against “the practice of the class struggle and of its Marxist interpretation while failing to see the kind of totalitarian society to which this process slowly leads” (p. 18). The SCDF makes a strong point about not repeating the bitter mistakes of history. The class struggle towards an inevitable classless society is a myth. A violent revolution does not necessarily result in a just regime. A major fact of our time emphasized by the Vatican document, is that today millions have been deprived of their freedom by “totalitarian and atheistic regimes which came to power by violent and revolutionary means precisely in the name of the liberation of the people” (p. 32).

While pointing to various grave national problems in the Philippines as the "roots and causes of violence" and admitting that the use of violence is not absolutely ruled out, the Catholic bishops have emphasized that "the option for non-violence must be respected . . . as a Christian pattern of action."<sup>10</sup> In several of his speeches during his 1980 visit to the Philippines, Pope John Paul II emphatically ruled out violence as the solution to social conflict and exhorted the people to resort to the "violence of love" based on justice. With regard to the Christian option and praxis of militant non-violence, I would like to believe that one explanation, among others, why the majority of the Filipino people up to now are not in favor of violence is not apathy or cowardice but the influence of the Christian faith on their daily lives.

### THEOLOGICAL ERRORS

The Vatican Instruction censures the errors which are either explicit or can be inferred logically from premises of certain writings of "theologians of liberation" as a consequence of the wrong application of the Marxist criterion of truth (p. 22). Thus theological conclusions in an exclusive or reductionist sense are erroneously drawn with respect to the nature of God, His Kingdom, the meaning of salvation, Christian faith, hope, and love, and the Church and the sacraments.

Firstly, the Marxist notion of history assumed by certain forms of LT denies God's transcendence. For Marxism, there is only one history for mankind and therefore it is false to make a distinction between the "history of salvation" and profane or secular history. The one history of mankind is the process of man's self-redemption through the class struggle within human history itself.

Secondly, from this notion of history there follows a wrong transposition of the meaning of Christian terms and themes. The Kingdom of God and its growth are identified with human liberations so that God himself is identified with history. Faith is "fidelity to history," fidelity to the revolutionary class struggle; hope is "confidence in the future," that is, the ultimate outcome

10. CBCP, *Exhortation Against Violence*, 1979, *Boletín Ecclesiástico de Filipinas* 53 (November-December 1979): 521-26. In their pastoral letter "On Social Justice," *CBCP Monitor* 3/2 (February 1982), the bishops point out the root causes of the escalating violence in the Philippines and the remedies.



of the class struggle; and love is the "class option, the option for the poor in the revolutionary struggle" (p. 23). Although for the Christian, religious faith has political implications, for the Marxist, faith is reduced to the partisan politics of the class struggle. Love of neighbor is reduced to violent class struggle and does not include the rich class which "is primarily a class enemy to be fought" (p. 24).

Thirdly, the Marxist notion of truth leads to a false understanding of the nature of the Church. From the viewpoint of the Christian faith, the "Church of the poor" refers to the Church's "preferential option for the poor" as well as to the renewed awareness by its members of the demands of evangelical poverty. But in the Marxist reinterpretation, the Church of the poor refers exclusively to the Church of the revolutionary class. As a consequence the *anawim* (poor) of the Bible are reduced to the proletariat of Marx. In the Christian faith, the "Church of the people" refers to the "People of God," the community of believers in Jesus Christ. But in the Marxist faith, the Church of the people is exclusively the Church of the oppressed people.

Fourthly, the Marxist vision does away with both the hierarchical structure and sacramental nature of the Church (pp. 24-25; 29). The spiritual nature of the Church which transcends any sociological institution is quite simply ignored and the relationship between the hierarchy and the faithful is reduced to a relationship of obedient domination to the law of the class struggle. The members of the hierarchy and the teaching office of the Church are denounced as the "objective representatives of the ruling class which must be opposed" (p. 25). The social teaching of the Church is rejected as typical of the middle class who have no role to play in history (p. 27). Thus the "people" must choose their own priests from their own ranks of the "people" in accordance with their revolutionary mission in history. The sacrament of the Eucharist is no longer the physical presence of the body and blood of Jesus Christ but merely the celebration of a people in the class struggle and therefore the reception of the Eucharist by the opposing rich class is meaningless.

Finally, having accepted the Marxist theory of class struggle as the ultimate norm of truth, certain forms of LT attempt to reinterpret and resystematize everything in Christianity so that it con-

forms to the classist" viewpoint. The Vatican Instruction warns against this novel interpretation of both the content of faith and of Christian existence which seriously departs from, and, in fact, denies the Christian faith (p. 16).

The anguish, zeal and compassion of so many heroic men and women working for and with the poor make them easily susceptible to the temptation of reducing salvation and evangelization to merely economic and political liberation. This is tantamount to identifying human liberation with the whole mission of the Church. The Latin American bishops' conference in Puebla made it clear that Christians should have a preferential option not only for the poor but also for the young. Yet in current LT "the young have in general been passed over in total silence" (p. 16).

This new method of interpreting the Christian faith which is either based on Marxist principles or on a rationalistic interpretation of the Bible (pp. 26-29) falsely assumes that the only true viewpoint is that of the oppressed and revolutionary class. Hence the erroneous conclusion is made that orthopraxis or "doing the truth" in the class struggle, not orthodoxy or the correct teaching of the Christian faith, is the ultimate norm of theological truth. Moreover, the new hermeneutic inherent in the "theologies of liberation" leads to an essentially political rereading of the Scriptures" (p. 27). For example, "instead of seeing, with St. Paul, a figure of baptism in the Exodus, some end up making of it a symbol of the political liberation of the people" (p. 28). Likewise, Mary's Magnificat is reinterpreted exclusively in political terms. The Kingdom of God is identified with the human liberation process and the whole of life is unduly politicized.

A false Christology emerges. The uniqueness of Jesus Christ, true God and true man, and his redemptive mission of liberating man from sin, are denied. The Christian creed, too, is literally preserved but is given a new meaning which is incompatible with the Christian faith. On the one hand, the "Jesus of faith" is rejected; on the other hand, the "Jesus of history" is encountered again as coming from the historical experience of the revolutionary poor in their struggle for liberation. In short, Jesus Christ is merely a symbol of the struggle of the oppressed and the salvific value of His death is rejected.

The final error of this new hermeneutic is a false ecclesiology;

namely, the development of a "popular Church" without the sacraments and independent of the hierarchy. Church unity is brought about not through reconciliation and communion in love as a gift of Christ but by means of the struggle of the classes.

### LIBERATION THEOLOGY IN THE PHILIPPINES

In the last fifteen years there has been a heightened social consciousness and intense social activity in the Philippine Church. There has been no lack of official social teaching on the part of the Catholic bishops of the Philippines.<sup>11</sup> But the problem in the Philippines as elsewhere in the Third World is the more effective communication and implementation of the Church's social teaching. Furthermore, the last decade and a half under the Martial Law regime witnessed an explosive increase of Church and Church-affiliated organizations for the promotion of justice and the defense of human rights. This background provided the matrix for the beginnings and early development of an emerging and indigenous LT influenced by Latin American LT but based on the faith-life experience of the Filipino people struggling for total human liberation.

Professional theologians and religious educators claim that the content of Filipino LT has not yet been fully contextualized and systematized by one Philippine theologian in any single book or major publication.<sup>12</sup> Some pastoral workers active in BCC's claim that genuine LT comes from the lived faith-experience of the people "doing" (praxis) justice. This LT, they hold, exists in the minds, hearts and lives of the poor and oppressed who are fighting to defend their basic human rights. These exponents of grassroots LT would caricature traditional seminary or college theology as armchair theology.<sup>13</sup> There should, however, be no false dichoto-

11. Richard P. Hardy, ed., has done a great service by collecting and editing the Church teaching of the Philippine hierarchy in one volume, *The Philippine Bishops Speak* (1968-1983) (Quezon City: Maryhill School of Theology, 1984).

12. The Loyola School of Theology, Ateneo de Manila University, publishes a series of informative studies on contemporary issues in Christian doctrine and life. Pertinent to LT are *Loyola Papers* on "Development or Liberation? Two Theologies" (no. 1); "On Faith and Justice" (no. 5); "On Faith, Ideologies and Christian Options" (no. 7/8); "In the Philippines: Christian Faith and Ideologies" (no. 10).

13. Carlos H. Abesamis, S.J., "Faith and Life Reflections from the Grassroots in the Philippines," in *Asia's Struggle For Full Humanity*, ed., Virginia Fabella (N.Y.: Orbis, 1980), pp. 123-39, claims, either explicitly or implicitly, that only the grassroots poor are the real theologians and that professional theologians are merely technicians.

my between the two levels of reflection—the theological/educational and the pastoral.

There has been a major shift of the Philippine LT movement from the educational level (school context) to the level of the common people (pastoral context).<sup>14</sup> The witness of the faith and the promotion of justice demand in the daily life of the Filipino Christian an integration of both doctrine (orthodoxy) and practice (orthopraxis). Therefore both the school and pastoral contexts and experiences are complementary and mutually enriching. The faith-life experience of the grassroots poor should largely contribute to the reflection of the Philippine theologians in the seminary or university and high school and college religious educators as well as catechists in parishes. At the same time, what is still lacking is more research, in-depth studies, and publication at the educational level of the wealth of faith-life experiences of the people under the guidance of pastoral workers and catechists working through grassroots communities.

There is much in the Vatican Instruction which can positively help Filipino Christians in confirming and further developing a Filipino theology of liberation. What crucial points does the Vatican document suggest for the reflection of today's Filipino Christians?

Firstly, according to the SCDF's Instruction, an authentic LT serves as one of the most effective means of conscientization toward the promotion of justice, the defense of human rights, and the preferential option for the poor and oppressed. One would think that the Vatican document was unmistakably referring to the present economic and political crisis in the Philippines in the following blunt description of the Latin American situation:

The seizure of the vast majority of the wealth by an oligarchy of owners bereft of social consciousness, the practical absence or shortcomings of a rule of law, military dictators making a mockery of elementary human rights, the corruption of certain powerful officials, the savage practice of some foreign capital interests constitute factors which nourish a passion for revolt among those who thus consider themselves the powerless victims of a new colonialism in the technological, financial, monetary or economic order (p. 20).

14. The movement of LT from the university to the common people is the main theme of Juan Luis Segundo's *The Shift Within Latin American Theology* (Toronto: Regis College, 1983).

Secondly, the Vatican document directly strikes a blow at the grave social sin of omission or Filipino apathy, sloth and complicity in the midst of massive poverty and structural injustice. In the wake of "the shocking inequality between the rich and the poor. . . between social classes in a single nation," where on the one hand, "some people have attained an unheard of abundance which is given to waste, while on the other hand, so many live in such poverty, deprived of the basic necessities, that one is hardly able even to count the victims of "malnutrition" (p. 6), the more privileged Filipino Christians can no longer afford to "maintain an attitude of neutrality and indifference in the face of the tragic and pressing problems of human misery and injustice" (p. 4). The Vatican document strikes a blow at the Filipino fatalistic and escapist *bahala na* attitude as well as the apathy and indifference (*pagwalang bahala, walang pakialam*) of the majority of Filipino people despite the numberless mass protest actions all over the land. The Vatican Instruction castigates "those who keep the poor in misery, who profit from that misery, who notice it while doing nothing about it, or who remain indifferent to it" (p. 29).

Thirdly, the document demands a double liberation from personal and structural or "social sin."<sup>15</sup> LT stresses both internal and external change, an interior change of heart and at the same time a change of unjust structures. Inasmuch as social, political or economic structures "are the result of man's actions and so are consequences more than causes" (p. 12), the Vatican document stresses the need of interior moral conversion as the necessary condition for changing unjust structures or "social sin." The SCDF found it necessary to warn some liberation theologians who exaggerated the need to change unjust structures first before moral conversion. According to Marx, all that is needed to wipe out sin

15. Liberation from social sin means that Filipino Christians who are in a position to do so must struggle to dismantle or change (1) structures which systematically oppress human dignity and violate human rights, e.g. Amendment 6; (2) sinful situations which promote and facilitate human selfishness and impose gross inequality, e.g. crony monopoly capitalism; and (3) complicity of persons who do not take responsibility for evil being done or who silently allow oppression and injustice, e.g., the government-controlled media suppressing or distorting the truth, or the infamous military conspiracy in the Aquino assassination. Cf. Peter J. Henriot, S.J., "The Concept of Social Sin," *Catholic Mind* 71 (October 1973): 38-53, gives an excellent summary of the development of the concept of social sin in Catholic thought.

is to change the economic structure. One may admit that economic and political structures are closely connected with sin, but one should recognize that sin has its real source in the human heart.

But in the Philippines of today, more than ever there is need to stress "social sin." The Vatican Instruction recognizes that "there are structures which are evil and which cause evil and which we must have the courage to change" (p. 12). The need of the hour is for fearless men and women who have the courage "to condemn abuses, injustice and attacks against freedom, wherever they occur and whoever commits them" (p. 5).

Among the Catholic responses to the Vatican Instruction, most of which are favorable and balanced, some express sadness and fear that the document will be used by the oppressors and enemies of the poor to discredit the work of the Church for the poor and that a misunderstanding and misuse of the document can bring great damage to the cause of the poor and oppressed. In conclusion then, it can be truly said that there is more than just liberation theology which is at stake in the Vatican Instruction.