It is a privilege which I particularly appreciate to be again—unfortunately only too briefly—part of the Oxford Institute. And I cannot miss the opportunity to express our respect, love and gratitude to Dr. Dow Kirkpatrick. He has been a decisive factor in the work of the Oxford Institute. But for us, Latin Americans, he has been a friend who has accompanied and represented us, who has worked and suffered with us—both in our own land and outside. Our participation in the Oxford Institute since very early was the result of his initiative. But it was also largely due to his earnest effort that the Institute itself took up and incorporated specific Latin American concerns in the Wesleyan thematic that the Institute has developed.

I would want to place within this framework my presentation this morning. There is little doubt that Wesley's concerns for the social and economic issues of his day, both as an attempt to understand them and as an effort to meet them in concrete ways has in recent years attracted the attention of Latin American Methodists. Social action has been always present in the Methodist mission to Latin America and in the life of the autonomous Methodist churches. But in the transition from the one to the other, certain critical questions had to be raised: Was the social activity of Methodists in Latin America a participation in a genuine Latin American project of social transformation or a mere transposition of foreign—specifically anglo-saxon—philanthropy, tied (consciously or unconsciously) to a liberal-capitalist neo-colonial/imperialist project? Can Methodism be understood as an attempt to "reform the nation" or has it to be seen as a religious accompanying music to the introduction of industrial capitalism? Is there room in Wesley's undoubtedly concern for the poor for a more radical understanding of social change? Latin American participation in the Oxford Institute at least since its 1973 meeting has turned, in different ways, around these questions. The book by Latin American authors (not only Methodist) visiting the Methodist 'heritage' edited by Dr. Kirkpatrick is an effort to analyze some of these questions while raising at the same time important critical issues. In this sense, the excellent work which several Wesley scholars—particularly in relation to the publication of the Bicentennial edition—are doing on Wesley's social attitude and thought give us a rich material to move forward in this discussion.

There is, however, a deeper question which needs to be raised both for theological and for missionary reasons: is the social, economic, even political concern, which is undoubtedly
present in the Wesleyan tradition, intrinsic to the evangelical renewal or only a significant, but after all peripheral, side-effect of its evangelistic drive? If the first, how is it—or how can it be—articulated theologically and expressed both in evangelical proclamation and in social participation? The question has come to me from two different directions. On the one hand, in the dialogue with Catholic and Protestant friends with whom I—and many other Latin American ministers and lay people—are committed in the theological interpretation of the Latin American struggles for liberation. To this question I want to turn our attention this morning. But, interestingly enough, there was another way in which I perceived the centrality of this question. In the last few years I have had the privilege of participating in several seminars with ministers of churches of Wesleyan tradition—Salvation Army, Nazarene, Holiness Pentecostals, Pilgrim—to explore the Wesleyan heritage. Most of them were ministers from poor areas, country, mining or mountain villages, with a tradition coming from the holiness movement. We spent most of our time reading and commenting texts of the Wesleys—hymns, appeals, thoughts, journal, sermons. Their spontaneous response when they found texts related to social questions—which they freely mixed with singing, praying and stories of their own pastoral experience—seemed to show that they 'sensed' in all they were reading a unity which attracted them but for which they did not have a theological support in the rather individualist, subjectivist and spiritualist evangelical heritage.

To pursue these two directions in a responsible way would require more time, knowledge and talent than I have. I will therefore simply follow my conversation as a Latin American evangelical pastor and would-be theologian with my friends and co-workers in what has been called Liberation Theology and offer what I think would be a possible approach to the quest for this wholistic understanding of salvation as the basis for our mission today. However, I hope that others with better knowledge of Wesley's work will take up the question of his own way of integrating theologically his evangelical 'battle for the soul' of his people and his concern for their social and economic condition. My own, rather superficial impression is that we can find some dispersed 'clues'—for instance in his theological argument against slavery—but that in his own mind and certainly in his language, there does not seem to appear a conscious or deliberate effort to articulate their unity. I have been, however, particularly impressed and challenged by Ted Runyon's look at Wesley's eschatological picture of 'the great salvation' projected back into his interpretation of a wholistic understanding of holiness, as hinted in his introduction to the Oxford 1977 Institute meeting on Sanctification and Liberation which he has developed in his forthcoming book, The New Creation: John

Let us now turn to the issue as posed in our Latin American theological work. 'Liberation theologians' are in fact a very diverse group of priests and ministers, mostly doing their theological and teaching work as part of their pastoral responsibility, related by some common concerns and in most cases also by personal friendship, but with very different theological and ecclesiastical backgrounds and ways of articulating their theological views. There is no such thing as a 'normative' liberation 'theory of salvation'. There are, however, certain common central emphases which are relevant for our subject. The most important one is the view that God's manifold activity for the sake of humankind and the world, which in Scripture is variously described as deliverance, redemption, justification, salvation, and which relates to material, social and personal dimensions, with immediate or eschatological reference, of judgement, forgiveness or empowerment should always be seen in its unity, as responding to one single divine purpose. Consequently, all these different aspects of God's activity—and our human response to them in faith and action—must be understood in their unity and interrelationship. It would, therefore, be wrong, to see some of them as less significant or as secondary—and perhaps dispensable—'consequences'.

It is true that 'liberation theology' has emphasized certain aspects related to social, economic and political realities which deeply affect the life of our peoples and which had frequently been either ignored or seen as only marginal or secondary for the Christian message, for theological understanding and for discipleship. The particular prominence which different issues acquire at particular points in the history of the Church—that can be easily documented—belongs to the dynamic and historical character of the Christian faith and must at the same time be seen as an invitation to a deeper understanding of the faith and corrected by placing it within this total unity of God's action which I am trying to underline.

These considerations, however, are simply the data for our question. Granted—for the sake of our argument—this 'unity' of the different dimensions which are included in the Biblical and theological language of 'salvation', the main question that arises is: how is the relation between these different aspects to be understood both in their unity and in their differentiation? And the question that follows for Liberation Theology: what is more precisely the place of

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3. In a paper presented at the World Ecumenical Conference on "Sanctification in the Benedictine and Methodist Traditions" held in Rome in 1994, on "Sanctification and Liberation" I was not, unfortunately, aware of Runyon's article.
liberation/justice within this unity and how does it reflect on other aspects or is informed by them? In this brief presentation I will try to open a consideration of these questions in three ways: (1) a very brief reference to the Biblical vocabulary of salvation, (2) a discussion of the way in which one of the most significant Latin American theologians—usually seen as the ‘founding father’ of Liberation Theology—answers the question and (3) a reflection on how these questions can be seen in the light of a Trinitarian theology.

I. THE BIBLICAL VOCABULARY OF ‘SALVATION’

It is not my intention to engage in a detailed study of this vocabulary. Fortunately, there is an ample detailed work, summarized in the best known theological dictionaries of the Old and New Testament. It is precisely these studies which suggest to me three points which are relevant for our concern.

(1) Scriptures, particularly the Hebrew Scriptures, exhibit a great freedom in the use of terms variously translated as salvation, liberation, deliverance, safety, redemption, which in turn, are closely related to ‘justice’, peace (shalom), health, freedom—their achievement or recovery. The different terms used, rather than establishing different kinds of action, describe different aspects of this action: ‘to have space’, to be freed from ‘choking’ or constriction, or to receive help in a situation of powerlessness or sickness, to escape from a dangerous condition, to feel safe, to secure one’s rights or to receive a correct judicial sentence. While the New Testament uses ‘salvation’ more specifically as a technical term for God’s action in Jesus Christ, it still relates it to different types of intervention: healing, liberation from enemies, forgiveness, acquittal in judgement as well as eschatological salvation. Pauline writings, however, although they can still use the term salvation in a wider sense, give to the different terms a more specific theological definition.

(2) In the wider use of the vocabulary of salvation, the subjects of saving—redeeming, liberating, restoring—action can be diverse (kings, leaders, common people) and not necessarily ‘superior’ to the receiver of this action. And the circumstances can refer to very different forms of danger: sickness, persecution, prison, natural events and even consequences of wrong actions. In this sense, the vocabulary is not necessarily ‘religious’ in a strict sense, though divine decision and action are almost always implicitly or explicitly present.

(3) God is, in the Biblical vocabulary, the ‘saviour’, ‘liberator’, ‘redeemer’ par excellence. In this sense, we find in both Old and New Testament a clear awareness that there is a limit to the ‘salvation/liberation/redemption’ that human beings can accomplish. The priority and singularity of divine
intervention remains central to the Biblical language of salvation, even when human beings are frequently the 'mediators' or 'agents' of God's action. The distinction which some scholars have tried to establish between "Deliverance, Help, Salvation through men" and "Deliverance, Help, Salvation through God" seems rather far-fetched and artificial, particularly in terms of vocabulary. It seems to me that V. Bergmann is far more correct when he admits, in his study of one of the important words used for salvation that "in none of these cases nsl ( ) becomes a specific theological concept".4

II. SALVATION AND LIBERATION/JUSTICE IN LIBERATION THEOLOGY

It seems to me that this brief exploration of Biblical vocabulary gives us a great freedom in facing our subject. It is clear that God's saving action is related to the whole of human life and the world, material and spiritual, present and eschatological, political, social or personal. It is also clear that divine and human action are not equated or confused but neither are they unrelated. Finally, the ways in which these actions take place—as prevention, protection, freeing, healing, restoring life, rescuing, acquitting, ransoming or defending—belong together and sometimes can be used interchangeably. This freedom does not, however, relieve the theologian from the task of establishing theological distinctions. "To distinguish is the only way I know to avoid confusing" is Congar reported to have answered to a student impatient about fine theological distinctions. Only we should be aware that such distinctions are, to a large degree, theoretical theological constructions, necessary for understanding and praxis, but which should not be reified or sacralized as God-established compartments of divine salvation.

"Liberation theology" has addressed in different ways the priority demand to keep the unity of God's relation to human life and history without ignoring or erasing the necessary distinctions. Whether we have succeeded in doing it is another question. I will offer now a brief exercise, centring in one of the most articulate representatives of Latin American theology: Gustavo Gutiérrez.

1. Gutiérrez immediately poses the central question: "To speak about a theology of liberation is to seek an answer to the following question: what relation is there between salvation and the historical process of the liberation of man?"5. The urgency of the question arises from pastoral


experience: how can you minister in the name of Christ to an impoverished and marginal people—he was pastoring a 'shanty town' district ('Pueblo joven' in Peruvian jargon)—who are struggling to emerge to a 'human life'? For the theological answer he has to look into a theological tradition which would help him to overcome the ordinary ecclesiastical and/or otherwordly response: "go to church and wait for heaven!". The nucleus for an answer he finds in the new and dynamic terms in which Catholic 'new theology' was rethinking in historical and anthropological categories the classical Catholic emphasis on the continuity between nature and grace.

Teilhard de Chardin had developed that continuity in terms of an evolution towards a full hominization of humanity in which the Christ event had introduced a new dimension by anticipating in the person of Christ that full humanity which was the goal and full realization of the divine project. Gutiérrez thus speaks of a "Christ-finalized" history. Karl Rahner, on the other hand, had seen the work of grace in human life not as the introduction of an alien element but as the fulfilling of a 'supernatural existential', a sort of 'indelible mark of the divine' intrinsic to human life.

On the basis on these understandings history had to be seen as 'a single history': "...there are not two histories, one profane and one sacred, 'juxtaposed' or 'closely linked'. Rather there is only one human destiny, irreversibly assumed by Christ, the Lord of history". And there is one single 'human project': "Salvation—totally and freely given by God, the communion of men with God and among themselves—is the inner force and the fullness of this movement of man's self-generation which was initiated by the work of creation" (and naturally, for Gutiérrez, resumed in Christ and directed eschatologically).

At the same time, any theology concerned with the concrete issues of human life has to look for the historical mediations of this salvation. In developing this, liberation theologians had usually resorted to three theological sources: (i) the central concept of 'love' as God's own self-definition: the outgoing, other-concerned, unreserved self-giving as the principle for this recreation of the human; (ii) the biblical 'story' of God's intervention in judgement and liberation in the history of God's people and in Jesus Christ; (iii) the concern for the poor, the outcast, the 'little ones' as the touchstone for God's redeeming acts—and consequently for our human response.

Although we are not at this time trying directly to "introduce" Wesley in our conversation, it is interesting to

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6. Ibid., p. 153. The Spanish original speaks of "one single becoming (devenir)" which is not exactly the same.

7. Ibid., p. 159.
find in Gutiérrez two possible elements of articulation. (1) Gutiérrez, and even more explicitly Segundo, work with an anthropology which qualifies the 'sinful' condition of 'natural man'. Segundo does it in relation to the doctrine of 'prevenient grace' defined at the Council of Orange (529AD): "from the beginning of humanity God's grace placed all persons on the path toward the intimate relationship with God and celestial life". Curiously enough, John Wesley resorts to the same notion, insisting on 'prevenient grace' as this universal and unmerited 'benefit of the atonement', in his attempt to find a 'point of contact' for a human experience of grace, and the XIX century Methodist theologian John B. Pope builds an ethic on the basis that "all human life is wrapped up... in the atonement". The christological-soteriological emphasis in both Wesley and Pope (not merely 'a remnant of creation', or 'general grace' but a universal grace directly tied to the atoning work of Jesus Christ) places this even closer to Liberation Theology. In a somewhat different but converging direction, Albert Outler called attention to this rapprochement of Wesleyan and early Scholastic anthropology in the "quod in se est" as a point of relation significant both in terms of ethics and redemption. (2) The emphasis on 'love' as a key to the understanding of what all salvation is finally about is also close to Wesley's interpretation of sanctification as a total control of thinking, decision and action by the motivation of 'the love of God' "poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit". We will make some critical comment at a later point.

2. Gutiérrez, however, is very careful not to identify totally Salvation and Liberation. Actually, he constructs a carefully elaborated framework to establish both the unity and the distinction of what he calls 'levels' (I prefer the idea of 'dimensions') in this "one history". Succinctly—and rather schematically—put, he speaks of three levels: socio-political, historico-philosophical and transcendent-redemptive. In each one of them there is an 'epistemology' (a way for knowing), a 'theory' and a 'praxis' appropriate to the level.

In the socio-political level, the way of knowing has to do with science: quantity and objectivity; this leads, on the one hand, to a 'theory', an elaboration of the data in order to devise a way of achieving socio-economic and political liberation (Think of Wesley's attempt to identify in very concrete political and economic terms 'the causes and cure of poverty!'). On the other hand, the empirical knowledge of socio-political reality aims at 'controlling reality', including human reality through technical knowledge and this raises, at a second level, ethical and philosophical, a quest

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for meaning, which inquires for the meaning of nature and of human nature and explores the possibilities of human realization. At this second level, also a theoretical construction appears: the understanding of history as a process of liberation, the conflictive history of freedom, both in relation to nature but also to the structures of society. It is at this place that humans develop 'utopias', human projections of possible 'new worlds' and possible 'new ways of being human'.

3. This is the point at which Gutiérrez draws a qualitative distinction between the 'immanent' and the 'transcendent' 'levels'. While there is a continuity between the first and the second level, there is a clear break—although not a lack of relation—between the first two and the third. Epistemologically, human philosophy raises the question of ultimate meaning and theoretically the utopia of a new man in a new world. But faith introduces here a diastasis: to the question of knowledge it responds by the challenge of faith (what Gutiérrez calls an 'epistemological leap') and to the question of utopia it responds with the announcement of 'grace' (God's freedom).

Thus there is a 'human praxis' of research, theory and social and political action—which exhausts the horizon of human action—and there is a 'praxis of faith' that, while including all of this as God-given and necessary mediation, places it in the context of faith. Christian praxis, therefore, accepts the autonomy of the socio-political level and develops what Segundo calls 'the adult Christian' who does no longer try to replace human knowledge by Christian theology. It participates in human hope and quest and exercises in that level a prophetic ministry, challenging half-way utopias and having 'the option for the poor' and marginal as a guiding criterion. A Christian praxis which, while accompanying the human quest and struggle with full commitment, does it from a praxis of faith—ecclesial participation and spirituality—which issues in the proclamation and announcement of salvation (evangelization): the good news of grace and the invitation to faith.

4. While I can accompany Gutiérrez in most of his analysis of the relation of Christian praxis to the praxis of social, cultural, economic and political liberation, I have felt—probably as a Protestant—that the theological point of departure—the concept of the 'one history' and of the 'universal process of humanization'—would need to be better defined and qualified. We should certainly reject a dualism which either relegates the 'life of the world' to a totally 'profane' level—or worse to the domain of the devil—or confuses the Church with the Kingdom of God. In both directions, a false dichotomy is introduced which ends, in some cases in total social irresponsibility, in others in ecclesiocratic attitudes or—probably in both—in a dual behaviour.
At the same time we should recognize that, within the unity of history, a distinction is necessary. The shift in the use of the vocabulary of salvation between the Old and New Testament which we saw earlier cannot be dismissed as simply the result of changed cultural environment or the influence of a Hellenistic anthropological dualism. It can be easily illustrated by the conditions of gentile converts. While for a Jew conversion meant the re-interpretation of his people's history, for the gentile it was also the assuming of another history, the history of Israel and of Jesus. We are not dealing with a separate history: it is always the story of Herod, Pilate, the Jewish priests and of Nero. But with the beginning of a mission which is indissolubly tied to a particular historical nucleus, the faith of the gentiles becomes subject to a twofold historical reference: their 'natural' one and this other story which becomes also the history of their faith. To confess the Kingdom is not for us, gentile Christians, only to enter into the meaning of our own history but at the same time to take distance from it and to be grafted into another history: to confess the exodus, the captivity, Bethlehem and Nazareth, Golgotha and the tomb of the Aritmathean as our own, not merely in their meaning, or their exemplarity but in their particular and unrepeatable—_exphapax_—historicity.

It is at this point where the concept of 'one history' as interpreted by Gutiérrez, and particularly by Segundo, looked to me insufficient. The problem can be identified at least in four ways. Christologically, it tends to interpret the history and the person of Christ as prototypical, illustrative, figurative or exemplary. To be sure, this reductionism is overcome in worship and spirituality, but in the development of praxis, christology tends to become a hermeneutical instrument rather than a constitutive reality (this is much more evident in Segundo than in Gutiérrez). This happens, for instance, in the insistence on 'love' as the central category to identify the presence of God in history. This, in principle, seems to me quite right and fruitful. When Segundo says that the gospel can be summarized in the conviction that "no love is lost in this world" he is undoubtedly right. But when 'love' is identified as an anthropological category, the critical nature of God's love incarnate in Jesus Christ as the measure of what love is, we run into a dangerous ambiguity in which the 'weight of sin', to use the Anselmian expression, seems to be underestimated.

In the second place, precisely as a consequence of this uncertain location of the story of Jesus, the event of the Cross and resurrection tend to become 'paradigms' for suffering and hope rather than once-for-all events into which we can enter eschatologically through the power of the Spirit and not simply reproduce them as 'models'. Thirdly, in terms of eschatology, the conflictive character of God's action in history runs the risk of being reduced to the progressive—though conflictive—overcoming of structures of injustice and oppression and to loose the awareness of the radical nature of
evil,—"the mystery of evil"—which the apocalyptic tradition preserves. Lastly, these theological imprecisions have a missionary/evangelizing consequence: they tend to weaken the radicality of the call to conversion: instead of a "turning", a "new birth" it can become a "growth", a new awareness, a greater commitment. The specificity of "an encounter with Christ"—to use the typical evangelical language—can be totally equated with a "commitment to the poor" and "the struggle for justice"—with serious loss both for the life of faith and service of the individual Christian person and of the community.

Certainly, this criticism does not evacuate the significance of the fundamental affirmations of Gutiérrez or Segundo concerning the unity of God's action in the world, the understanding of "historical liberation" as a necessary dimension of "salvation", the "option for the poor" as a focus for understanding Christian praxis or the eschatological significance of human action of love and justice. What we look for is a theological framework in which these foundational element of liberation theology can be protected from misunderstanding and be solidly rooted in God's self-revelation. I think this can be found in a trinitarian basis which is implicit in the work of Gutiérrez and partially explicit in that of Segundo but that perhaps can be carried further.

III. A TRINITARIAN FRAMEWORK

In more recent theological production of "liberation theologians" this trinitarian presupposition tends to become more and more explicit and precise. I refer to Gutiérrez' 1989 book El Dios de la Vida; Ronald Mañoz' El Dios de los Cristianos (1987), Leonardo Boff's La Trinidad, la Sociedad y la Liberación (1986). I have myself discussed the need for a Trinitarian framework for Latin American Protestant theology in Faces of Latin American Protestantism (1997). A recent dissertation by the young Argentine Lutheran professor Guillermo Hansen is perhaps the best and most developed explicit discussion of this question, The Doctrine of the Trinity and Liberation Theology: A Study of the Trinitarian Doctrine in Latin American Liberation Theology (1995). In relation to our Wesleyan tradition, the trinitarian imprint is clear. In John's and Charles' hymns, for instance, it is clearly related to the work of Christ. In sermons and treatises it underlies the discussion of creation and anthropology. Manfred Klaibert has pointed out Wesley's trinitarian framework in his doctrine of grace—prevenient, justifying, sanctifying. To what extent is all this organically related to the Methodist "evangelical revival" needs, I think, to be more carefully researched and evaluated.

As far as our Latin American evangelical theology is concerned—Methodists included—the Trinitarian dimension, while never denied formally, has not nourished our evangelization and service. To conclude this presentation I will simply mention three directions in which I think that Trinitarian doctrine offers the fundamental theological framework for articulating the relation Salvation/Liberation-Justice.

1. Liberation Theology has developed its trinitarian approach beginning with the Biblical story: the history of God’s acts of liberation witnessed in Scripture reveal a Trinitarian pattern which finds its explicit expression in the several triadic formulae in the New Testament. In this sense, we begin from ‘the economic Trinity’ to the affirmation of the ‘immanent’ or ‘ontological Trinity’. This seems to me to be correct, because we cannot discover God’s triune being except through God’s revelation. Boff is also quite right in insisting that this revelation corresponds entirely to God’s own being: “God’s revelation to us is the actual being of God. So, if God appears to us as a Trinity, this is because God’s actual being is a Trinity...The reality of the Trinity makes the manifestation of the divine in history be trinitarian”

But we must perhaps also insist that, while in the order of knowledge the ‘economic trinity’ is prior, in the order of being the immanent Trinity is prior. God does not become trinitarian in his acts: the acts reveal an eternal trinitarian transcendence. This is important for our subject because it corrects a tendency to what Hansen has called "an hyper-inflation of the human" in some early Liberation Theology. It is possible to give such a weight to "God’s history with God’s world" that God becomes a ‘process’ which is somehow made possible by human action. The absolute priority of the ‘immanent Trinity’ in the order of being is the theological safeguard of God’s priority in the order of salvation. At this point we can affirm theologically this ‘divine initiative’ that we pointed out in our brief reference to the vocabulary of salvation. It is also the battle that was fought in the early centuries and which produced the basic definitions of Trinitarian dogmas. The classical Protestant insistence on the priority of grace thus finds its ultimate ground, not in some arbitrary ‘plan’ but in the very nature of God’s ‘preceding’ reality.

2. Closely related to this point is the question of ‘synergism’, the meaning of what we called earlier ‘human mediation’ in God’s acts of liberation and which now we can best characterize as the ‘assuming’ or the ‘incorporation’ of the creature in God’s saving—both in the evangelistic call to repentance and conversion and in the liberating acts of justice for the sake of the poor. In his article on

"Methodism's theological heritage" which we quoted before, Albert Outler has made some very important points in relation to what he calls "Wesley's undeniable synergism", which he characterizes as "covenantal synergism" "in which both prevenient and saving grace are recognized as coordinate providential activities of the one true God of love who, in his love, makes and keeps covenant with faithful men"11.

In his dissertation mentioned above, prof. Hansen has carried forward the understanding of synergism by recovering and re-interpreting in a different connection the traditional concept of 'enhypostasis'. I cannot attempt to summarize here his carefully developed argument, which of course would need to be discussed in detail, but the central point relevant to our subject seems to me well expressed in a brief paragraph:

It is in this manner...that we reach our final point, namely, that precisely in the enhypostatic nature of
Christian praxis, the event of the divine-human
'cooperation' coheres, not as a reality pertaining
to two causal, agential entities involved in a reciprocal-
conditional exchange, but as the relationship existing
between the hypostatic termini posited by God's decision
to be God not without the creatural--i.e. to be triune 12.

If 'enhypostatic' means "to find one's identity in the
other", then the divine initiative gets its historical
'identity' as it becomes incorporated ("incarnate") in human
praxis and human praxis gets its transcendent meaning and
reality as it is assumed by the Holy Spirit. Certainly, the
author is aware of the protections needed by such a
formulation. He points out that we are not yet at the point
where "God is all in all" but in the intermediate time where
the human actor still maintains "the characteristics and
constraints of any human witness and praxis (thus always
subjected to the judgement of God)". I would myself wish this
caveat to be further developed in terms of Luther's 'simul
justus et peccator' sentence. But the central theological
insight--which is not so distant from the Eastern
understanding of 'theosis' of which Wesley was well aware--
seems to me a necessary overcoming of the dualistic
presuppositions which have plagued the discussions on
synergism and human-divine so called 'cooperation'.

3. Finally, I would point to the importance of paying
attention to two basic trinitarian definitions as we try to
understand the relation between 'salvation', now understood to
refer to the totality of the operation of God's grace on


12. Guillermo C. Hansen, The Doctrine of the Trinity and
liberation theology: A study of the Trinitarian doctrine and
its place in Latin American Liberation theology: U.M.I.
behalf of humankind and creation and liberation, now identified as God's action in the historical process of human liberation—and even more pointedly, in our situations of poverty, deprivation, injustice and oppression. The first is that `opera trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt'; the second, the `appropriations' which establish the distinctions between the persons of the Trinity.

I think of the importance of these theological definitions when we consider the diversity and the unity in the Christian praxis of faith—both of the individual Christian and of the Christian community—the proclamation of the Gospel, the invitation to faith, the pastoral service of comfort and guidance, the prophetic ministry of judgement and the political service in society. There is a Biblical distinction of gifts and vocations, which corresponds to the manifold character of God's own action in the world. There is also a distinction of spheres of action both in the life of the Church and of the Christian believer. But to detach the gifts, the vocations or the spheres from each other, to absolutize any one or to 'grade' them as more or less significant in their relation to God is to introduce in the work of God and in God self a dichotomy which is then reproduced in the life of the church and of the believer.

It is difficult to deny that this dichotomy has had serious consequences. It has not only distinguished but separated evangelization and service, conversion and the quest for justice, the worship of God, the participation in the community of faith and responsibility in society. We have 'prioritized' by our own decision which dimensions are more important in God's work; even more, we have felt authorized to choose which 'god' we want to honour: let the 'liberals' serve the Creator, the 'evangelicals' the Redeemer and the 'pentecostals' the Spirit! We have believed that the Christian community could 'specialize' in one thing and set aside the others. It would be easy to follow the tracks of this heresy throughout our history and the present life of the Churches. If 'mission', however, is the participation in the fullness of 'God's mission', 'evangelization'—to take one issue—cannot but be, together with the proclamation of the reconciliation realized in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, a testimony to God's good creation and the call to cultivate it and keep it, an announcement of God's justice and the call to practice and serve it. An evangelization, a worship and a praxis which are truly trinitarian is an invitation to participate in faith in God's own life and therefore in the totality of what God has done, does and will do to fulfil the purpose of being "all in all".13

This does not eliminate, however, the need to respect the distinction, the identity of the persons of the Trinity and

the specific 'missions' of the Son and of the Spirit. In relation to a trinitarian theology of liberation, this means several things which sometimes we have neglected, to the detriment of a Christian praxis of liberation. It means:

(i) The relative 'autonomy' of creaturely existence--the world, social reality, political and economic life--not as a closed in itself 'kingdom' which has to be left to its own so called 'laws' but as a realm of God's creation, where the Spirit is active and which is destined to be assumed in the final 'kehrhaliosis' in Christ, but according to its own peculiarities which we have to discover, discern and respect together with our human brothers and sisters;

(ii) precisely because this creaturely existence is destined to be brought together under the headship of the Son, we are not left without orientation in trying to understand its purpose and direction: the whole creation has been 'reborn' and 're-directed' in the ministry of reconciliation and redemption of the Son and Christian praxis can discern in the whole Biblical witness to God's purpose the orientation for its concrete commitments: here the hermeneutical work of the Latin American Biblical scholars that have explored the 'reserve of meaning' of classical loci like the liberation from Egypt, the exile, the apocalyptic writings finds its theological location.

(iii) Christian praxis of liberation demands at a certain point specific social, political and economic options which cannot be simply made on the basis of 'scientific knowledge' or of Biblical and theological scholarship--however necessary and decisive both things are. There is at this point a 'discernment' which assumes both the first and the second element but which synthesises and projects them by an act of decision. This Christian praxis happens 'with fear and trembling' because such decisions are always at the same time a 'discernment of the Spirit' and 'a temptation of the flesh'. The awareness of this ambiguity should prevent the absolutization of the decision, the awareness of its provisionality and a readiness for correction. But it should not lead to perpetual indecision, impossible--and only apparent--neutrality or retreat into a paralysed 'piety'. Rather, it is an invitation to prayer and trust, which indeed are the final word in a Christian praxis of liberation.

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Buenos Aires, July 30, 1997

14. Several issues of the Latin American Journal of Biblical Study, RIBLA: Revista de Interpretación Bíblica Latinoamericana (in Spanish, Editorial DEI, San José, Costa Rica, CA and in Portuguese Editora Vozes, Petropolis/RJ, Brazil) have explored different social and political issues in this perspective (economics, feminism, oppression, violence, etc.).