

The Church as Herald of the Gospel of Liberation in the Theology of Juan Luis Segundo

Marilyn Sunderman¹

Abstract

In the last century, Jesuit theologian Juan Luis Segundo developed a theology of Church from a liberationist perspective. *Gaudium et Spes*, a Vatican Council II document, served as a key source in Segundo's articulation of his ecclesiology in which he discusses the Church's role in building Christ's Kingdom of love and justice in the world. Segundo views the Church as a community of radical lovers who continue Jesus' prophetic mission. For Segundo, the nature of the Church is minoritarian and it is a leaven. This study treats these aspects of Segundo's ecclesiology and includes an assessment of its strengths and weaknesses.

Keyword: Base Community; Christendom; Church as leaven; Kingdom of God; Liberation Ecclesiology; Minoritarian and prophetic nature of Church

Introduction

Juan Luis Segundo, a 20th century Jesuit liberationist theologian who ministered in Uruguay, developed his ecclesiology within the context of situations of oppression prevalent in Latin America during the time in which he lived. Segundo, who grounded this thinking in the Vatican II document, *Gaudium et Spes*, articulated a theology of Church as a community empowered to carry on Jesus' mission of heralding the gospel of liberation. This study seeks to shed light on Segundo's conviction that the community called Church must embody its commitment to advance the good news of salvation by living out the radical demands of efficacious loving in solidarity with oppressed persons. According to Segundo, such prophetic heralding of the gospel entails the Church community's engagement in ongoing critique of oppressive systems and in activity that seeks to replace such systems with economic, political, social, and religious structures that enhance integral human development.

1. *Gaudium et Spes* and Segundo's Ecclesiology

In 1965, *Gaudium et Spes* (*The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*), was published. In this document, the Vatican Council II Fathers emphasize the "special role of Christianity in working for human dignity" (Chopp, 1986: 15) and the "need for structural change" (Chopp, 1986: 203) to promote the common social good. *Gaudium et Spes* grounds its assertion of the inherent dignity, value, and meaning of each human life in the belief that every person is indwelt by God and is meant to be a co-partner with God in the development of a better world. At the end of his work, *The Community Called Church*, Segundo includes a section entitled "Related Conciliar Documents" in which he refers to various segments of *Gaudium et Spes* as the major source for his development of a theology of the Church viewed from a Latin American liberationist perspective. As one commentator notes, since "Segundo perceived *Gaudium et Spes* to be the primary springboard for post-conciliar theology" (Slade, 1979: 203) and since "Segundo's theological method placed stress on the current situation of the theologian. ... it is therefore not surprising that he drew most heavily upon that document which sought the greatest openness to the modern world." (Slade, 1979: 203) Another author comments: Segundo's relish for *Gaudium et Spes* was perhaps related to the Latin American elements in its origin.

¹ RSM, Department of Theology, Saint Joseph's College, 278 Whites Bridge Rd., Standish, Maine 04084-5263. Phone: 207-893-7951, Fax: 207-893-7866, Email: msunderm@sjcme.edu

The pre-history of *Gaudium et Spes* began with the life and work of Dom Helder Camara, Archbishop of Recife, Brazil [during the time period that Vatican Council II took place]. The then Archbishop of Recife went to Vatican II immersed in the struggle to humanize the vast slums (favelas) of Brazil. For this reason, he began - in his own quiet way - to lobby for a document such as *Gaudium et Spes* almost from the moment he entered the room. ... [Thus, it can be said that] Helder Camara was the decisive impulse behind the generation of the text. (Vorgrimler, 1969: 10) Some themes from *Gaudium et Spes* that Segundo integrates into his ecclesiology include: Christology as the foundation for an adequate theology of Church; the Church as the universal sacrament [sign] of salvation in the world; the affirmation of human dignity, rooted in the view of person as *imago Dei*, as the basis for solidarity in seeking justice by working for the fulfillment of the common good in society; and the relationship between human betterment and the growth of God's Kingdom of love in the world. According to Segundo, authentic ecclesiology roots itself in Christology. *Gaudium et Spes (Pastoral Constitution)* highlights this point when it proclaims that Christ entrusted to his Church the gospel that "announces and proclaims the freedom of the daughters and sons of God." (*Gaudium et Spes*, 1962: 41) The *Pastoral Constitution* adds that "In virtue of the gospel entrusted to it, the Church proclaims human rights." (*Gaudium et Spes*, 1962: 41) Segundo's ecclesiology affirms the teaching of *Gaudium et Spes* that human rights are based on human nature being raised to a "dignity beyond compare" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 1962: 22) by the fact that the Word of God assumed a human nature.

The Church is a sign of universal salvation brought about through Jesus' self-donating, loving way of being in the world that culminated in his crucifixion and resurrection. In *Gaudium et Spes*, the Council Fathers explain that as a sign of universal salvation, the Church "[i]n every age... carries the responsibility of reading the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel." (*Gaudium et Spes*, 1962: 34) In his ecclesiology, Segundo echoes this teaching and concurs with the *Pastoral Constitution* statement that "The impact that the Church can have on modern society is due to an effective living of faith and love." (*Gaudium et Spes*, 1962: 42) Likewise, the *Pastoral Constitution* and Segundo's ecclesiology both highlight the fact that "Christians who shirk their ... duties towards their neighbor, neglect God... and endanger their eternal salvation." (*Gaudium et Spes*, 1962: 43) In his ecclesiology, Segundo embraces the principle of solidarity enunciated in *Gaudium et Spes*. Perhaps the most poignant reference to this principle is found at the very beginning of the *Pastoral Constitution*. Herein the Council Fathers boldly assert: The joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of our times, especially of those who are poor or afflicted, are the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well. (*Gaudium et Spes*, 1962: 1) This statement is a kind of *Magna Carta* for both *Gaudium et Spes* and Juan Luis Segundo's assertion that earthly progress and growth of the Kingdom of God are interrelated. Regarding this, *Gaudium et Spes* states:

All who in obedience to Christ seek first the kingdom of God will derive from it a stronger and purer motivation for helping all their brothers and sisters and for accomplishing the task of justice under the inspiration of charity." (*Gaudium et Spes*, 1962: 69) *Gaudium et Spes* stresses, and Segundo reiterates in his writings, that the needs of poor persons are an absolute priority of the human community. (See *Gaudium et Spes*, 1962: 69) The Vatican Council II Fathers and Segundo agree that the Church exists in the world to enable all persons, especially those who are exploited, to derive benefit from focus on the common good. The *Pastoral Constitution* describes the common good as embracing "the sum total of all those conditions of social life which enable individuals, families, and organizations to achieve complete and effective fulfillment." (*Gaudium et Spes*, 1962: 74) Both Segundo and the Council Fathers stress the fact that, in this regard, affluent persons and nations have a profound moral obligation to bear witness to Jesus' command to love others by enabling those who suffer from "hunger, disease, and all kinds of misery" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 1962: 88) to experience a truly "human" life. Segundo's reliance on *Gaudium et Spes* in the articulation of his theology of Church sets the stage for an exploration of dimensions of Segundo's ecclesiology that both reflect the thinking of the Vatican II Council Fathers and the context of the Latin American situation of which Segundo was a part. To this end, what follows treats Segundo's discussion of: the Church and the Kingdom; the Church as summons to love; the Church as a prophetic community; and the minoritarian nature of the Church.

2. The Church and the Kingdom

According to Segundo, the Church collaborates with Jesus in the building of God's Kingdom of love and justice. For Segundo, all historical activity for the betterment of humanity contributes to the development of the Kingdom. (See Slade, 1979: 218) Segundo asserts that "growth of the Kingdom and authentic earthly progress are to be identified with each other." (Segundo, 1974: 129) God and human beings work together to create a better world and, thus, enable the Kingdom to come in the here-and-now.

Regarding this, Segundo notes that the author of the Gospel of Luke "associates the coming of the Kingdom with the present: 'For behold, the Kingdom of God is in the midst of you.' (Lk. 17:21)." (Segundo, 1974: 159) Segundo continues: Perhaps this means that now as a result of Jesus' revelation of the secrets of the Kingdom, we can begin to have a conscious convergence between the efforts of human beings and the efforts of God in the building of a Kingdom that is spread out over the course of history. (Segundo, 1974: 159) According to Segundo, then, every liberative event stands in a causal relationship to the Kingdom. (See Lord, 1989: 301) For Segundo, liberation is the concrete form that the Kingdom takes in history. When human beings act in solidarity with those struggling for freedom and work with them to build a new society of liberation and justice, the Kingdom comes. To struggle for justice is to struggle for the Kingdom. All ways in which human beings act in solidarity with oppressed persons are means by which the Kingdom further develops in this world. Every time instances of human misery and exploitation are eliminated, the Kingdom arrives in the present moment. Contrariwise, Whenever human beings are mistreated, abused, oppressed and deprived of their elementary rights and their conditions of living, the Kingdom has not arrived and will not fully arrive until those negative conditions are improved and eventually removed. (Mora, 1987: 260) In a very positive vein, Segundo reflects that To obtain the Kingdom is to see to it that everyone has the dose of humanity they need to be human beings. ... We are dealing with an essential, intrinsic constituent of the Kingdom: namely, that all have their principal human needs solved. (Segundo, 1974: 159)

For Segundo, then, the Kingdom comes when human beings work to transform dehumanizing relationships and social structures into ones that reflect God's liberating values. Segundo declares that "God's reign can only mean that God's values have been fleshed out in reality." (Segundo, 1974: 150) In his writings, Segundo emphasizes that the Kingdom was dynamically present in the person and activity of the historical Jesus of Nazareth. During his years of public ministry, Jesus attempted to transform the very fabric of human relationships in order that poor and oppressed persons might experience the true meaning of liberation. In and through his solidarity with the dispossessed in his society, Jesus manifested the Kingdom in a manner *par excellence*. Jesus' good news was that God's Kingdom of liberation arrives when dehumanizing relationships and structures are transformed into life-giving ones. By means of his words and deeds of love, Jesus concretized the Kingdom. When Jesus proclaimed throughout Galilee that the Kingdom was at hand, he did so by applying to himself the following passage from the Old Testament book of Isaiah: The spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me; he has sent me to announce good news to the poor, to proclaim release for prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind; to let the broken victims go free. (Luke 4:18) In his ministry, Jesus made common cause with the struggles and interests of exploited persons. First and foremost, he chose to address the needs of the "lowly and socially marginalized, the sick, the disadvantaged, and the poor people who were victims of injustice" (Segundo, 1974: 122) in his society. In his writings, Segundo stresses that the Kingdom belongs to these people precisely because of their inhumane situation. According to Segundo, "God's joy lies in rescuing sinners and the poor from the misfortune and marginalization in which they find themselves and in restoring their humanity to them." (Segundo, 1974: 124)

Though Segundo maintains that the Kingdom belongs to exploited persons by virtue of their situation of exploitation, he is quick to note that Jesus' proclamation of the gospel of liberation includes the need for conversion on the part of these persons. Segundo reflects: But the poor are... in need of a certain change of outlook or conversion so that they may believe in the good news, precisely because it is so good, so seemingly incredible, and so different from their accustomed situation. (Segundo, 1974: 141) According to Segundo, Kingdom proclamation, which is good news for oppressed persons, is "bad news for ... groups that stand opposite the poor in the social spectrum" (Segundo, 1974: 91) because it sounds a death knell to the privileges they enjoy at the expense of the poor. (See Segundo, 1974: 11) In effect, such Kingdom proclamation constitutes a threat to the rich persons' very way of being because it demands that they experience "the liberating insecurity of having to opt for the poor." (Segundo, 1974: 131) In essence, Jesus' message of the good news of liberation demands that rich persons undergo a radical conversion of mind and heart. This conversion requires their beginning to share God's sentiments regarding the dehumanized situation of the dispossessed in society. This involves sharing "God's joy ... in rescuing ... the poor from the misfortune and marginalization in which they find themselves and in restoring their humanity to them." (Segundo, 1974: 124) Jesus' disciples, who are members of his Church, continue his Kingdom proclamation of the good news of liberation by actively participating in the "search for ... solutions to the basic problems of human existence" (Ritt, 1988: 237) including hunger, poverty, and lack of self-determination.

Jesus challenges his disciples to involve themselves in on-going ideological critique of societal mechanisms of oppression in order to dismantle them and create, in their place, structures that restore to poor and oppressed persons the very humanity denied them. In this way, Jesus' followers contribute to the here-and-now coming of the Kingdom. In a word, the Church, that is, the followers of Jesus, join him in doing the truth in love by opening their minds, hearts, and spirits to the needs of their impoverished sisters and brothers. Such discipleship demands on-going conversion to God's profound sensitivity to the inhumane situation of oppressed persons and a commitment of solidarity with them in working to transform existing exploitative social structures. In this way, Jesus' disciples continue to make visible the liberating nature of Jesus' good news message.

3. The Church as Summons to Love

According to Segundo, the Church represents the culminating stage of evolution for she possesses, through her belief in Christ, the consciousness of love's reality. (See Persha, 1980: 266) The Church is aware of God's universal saving mystery made manifest in Jesus Christ, i.e., that salvation is in self-giving in love. (See Tripole, 1981: 9) As the "reflective awareness of the redemptive reality of love," (Persha, 1980: 119) the Church proclaims the direct correlation between forward evolutionary movement and the free exercise of efficacious love. From an evolutionary perspective, the Church's mission is to contribute to the development of more complex syntheses of love. The Church proclaims that love is the evolutionary energy *par excellence*. Through a life of efficacious loving, the Church embodies negentropy, the positive thrust of evolution. The Church is aware of God's call to all people to love one another. (Slade, 1979: 337) The Church knows that God wills "that all human beings ... concretely and effectively love one another" (Slade, 1979: 335) and that such concrete acts of love are the only criteria by which humanity, in the last analysis, will be judged." (Slade, 1979: 335) In his writings, Segundo highlights the fact that the Church is meant to be a visible, operative sign of God's love for the world. The function of the Church is to proclaim and witness to the world that "love is possible, full of meaning, and worthy of man's struggle." (Persha, 1980: 266) Through her life of service to the world, the Church seeks to be a leaven of love in the world. In essence, the Church is a community summoned to love, i.e., to participate in God's plan to redeem the world through efficacious love. The Church commits herself to a life of self-giving, which is love. According to Segundo, God, who is self-gift of love, places in each person an extraordinary capacity for self-giving love. Segundo describes love as the "deepest dynamism that God has placed in man." (Segundo, 1973:66) Thus, love is of divine origin and anyone who engages in such self-giving to any degree exercises the divine life that is in him or her. (See Persha, 1980: 81)

Liberative self-giving, which is love, entails responding to the neighbor's real needs. As Segundo asserts, "Christ's command to love is as concrete ... as the face of starvation that appears on our television screens." (Segundo, 1973:100) Such love of neighbor embodies one's love of God. Regarding this, Segundo poignantly states that "To love is to enter into intimate relationship with God ... All love loves God." (Segundo, 1964: 72) Segundo also stresses that "Where there is no love of neighbor, there is no knowledge of or relationship with God." (Segundo, 1973: 66) Hence, Segundo insists that, since membership in the Church is a radical summons to love the neighbor, "those who are not committed to being this kind of sign should not belong to it." (Hennelly, 1979: 103) According to Segundo, love of enemies is the highest form of negentropy, the positive evolutionary vector. Such love asks that one integrate one's enemies into one's own circuit "in a far richer and more effective way, when they are in fact the most difficult thing ... to integrate." (Segundo, 1988: 64) For Segundo, the only thing demanded of human beings is love and no one can take another's place in this unique, progressive task. (See Segundo, 1973: 107) Segundo writes: "All love is a gamble, wherein we risk the best and deepest part of ourselves Every act of love is ... an act of trust....It is a belief that love is worthwhile." (Segundo, 1973: 57) Segundo adds that "From faith, we know that nothing can destroy what love constructs. No love is ever lost." (Segundo, 1973: 58) Members of the Church, who follow in the footsteps of Jesus who embodied love in action in an extraordinary way, understand that by loving they contribute to God's unfolding evolutionary plan. Jesus' followers embrace the fact that it is love and love alone that transforms persons and social structures into realities that better reflect the values that Jesus espoused. Disciples of Jesus maintain that "authentic love builds the new earth." (Segundo, 1973: 58) They believe that to love authentically means to build with others a society in which they can develop and reach fulfillment.

4. The Church as a Prophetic Community

The Church roots its prophetic nature in Jesus' "vocation of social responsibility." (Haughey, 1977: 270) Segundo notes that the author of the Gospel of Luke describes Jesus as the "anointed prophet of Isaiah" (Lk. 4:17) and as a "prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people." (Lk. 24: 19) Jesus fulfilled the great hope of the Jewish people of his time that there would come one who, like the prophets of old, would "take the side of the widow, the stranger in the land, and those on the margin of society." (Donahue, 1988: 175) In his writings, Segundo notes that the prophets of Israel commonly experienced denunciation and rejection. As Segundo states, "Almost all the authentic prophets had to pay in bloodshed for the right or duty to exercise their prophetic mission." (Segundo, 1974: 80) The life of the prophet Jesus followed this pattern of rejection and murder. The fact that Jesus laid his life on the line by embracing his prophetic mission attests to his profound commitment to denouncing all forms of dehumanization prevalent in the society of his day. Jesus' prophetic activity shook the very foundation of Jewish society because he insisted on the wholesale dismantling of any structures that served the rich by oppressing the multitude of the poor in Israel. (See Segundo, 1974: 182) Segundo reflects on the consequences of Jesus' commitment of solidarity with poor and oppressed persons in his society when he writes:

Every effort on behalf of justice and truth inevitably evokes resistance from those who have their own interests to preserve, who do not want people to call into question the conceptual system or the unjust order to which they have become habituated. When Jesus of Nazareth was led to the place of execution, he verified this fundamental law that is operative in the human world such as it is. He was aware of this law and did not dodge it. To bring his work to completion, he chose to accept the law that rules in man's world: every positive effort on behalf of justice and truth encounters violent resistance. And the more profound and decisive the required work of transformation is, the more violent the resistance will be. (Segundo, 1974: 36, 37) The Church continues Jesus' prophetic ministry by taking the side of poor and exploited persons and challenging all oppressive socio-economic, political, and religious ideologies. The prophetic nature of the Church requires that she lend "support to the downtrodden of every social class so that they may come to know their rights and how to make use of them." (Hennelly, 1982: 29) The Church recognizes such activity may lead to the martyrdom of some of its members who, like Jesus, refuse to renounce the prophetic gospel of liberation. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer stresses, true discipleship is costly. It can demand one's very life. As herald of the gospel of liberation, the Church confronts the questions that love raises. It replies with a prophetic "yes" to justice and liberation and an unwavering "no" to injustice and oppression. Furthermore, in each particular milieu in which it exists, the Church exercises its prophetic nature by choosing the "ideology... that will promote the most effective love possible in that situation." (Ridell, 1977: 152)

5. The Minoritarian Nature of the Church

In his ecclesiological writings, Segundo asserts that the nature of the Church is minoritarian. According to Segundo, the Church is a minority called to costly discipleship in the service of the majority of the world's people. Segundo insists that the "very nature of the demands of the gospel message will always keep the Church as a minority within the world." (Persha, 1980: 275) As one commentator notes, Segundo insists that To receive masses of people into her membership, without an interiorly formed and personally committed adherence to the gospel and to the responsibility which the latter implies, is to impede the Church from carrying out her very mission. (Persha, 1980: 275) Segundo's critique of what centuries past came to be known as Christendom is that it represented a quantitative understanding of the Church's universal nature. This is so since the principle by which Christendom operated was the establishment of very minimum requirements of its members. These included baptism, some practice of the sacraments, and the profession of adherence to Christianity. In this way, the greatest numbers of people were able to become members of the Church. (See Segundo, 1973: 83) Segundo adds that during the Christendom era "Public customs and ways of thinking were 'bathed in Christianity,' so that becoming a part of society almost automatically meant becoming a member of the Church." (Segundo, 1973: 67, 68) According to Segundo, in recent times the Church in Latin America has sought to continue the principle of Christendom by making a "desperate attempt to maintain Christian majorities." (Segundo, 1978: 39) Segundo insists that the price paid for this has been the loss of meaningful community. As Segundo sees it, the antidote for this lies in developing "comunidades base" (base communities) in which small groups of Christians embrace and live out the heroic demands of the gospel of liberation in their particular milieu.

In Segundo's mind, these base ecclesial communities are able to best exemplify the Church's prophetic vocation. (See Nealen, 1991: 105) For Segundo, then, the Church's life of love and service does not advance by becoming quantitatively universal, therein "reducing the exigencies of the gospel message to some minimal level so as to win the adhesion of the masses." (Segundo, 1976: 231) Rather, by embracing a radical life of loving service, members of the Church act as a minority that functions as a ferment of love in the world. Segundo maintains that, as a minority, Church membership is composed of "those willing to carry the Christian message to the rest of society ... and to commit themselves personally to a radical transformation of society in line with Christ's message." (Segundo, 1978: 71) Members of the Church resist the mass/majority tendency to cede to the law of minimal effort. According to Segundo, the Church seeks to effect newer, costly, creative, and more complex syntheses of love in the world. (See Persha, 1980: 279) The minority that is the Church advances the evolutionary process by living out Jesus' law of liberative self-giving. In essence, Segundo's ecclesiology calls for a shift from artificial majorities to the formation of a heroic minority. (See Segundo, 1978: 71) Segundo views the Church as a creative minority called to be extraordinary lovers who act as a leaven in the world. Self-giving love practiced with reflective awareness is what most clearly defines the Church's inherent minoritarian character. (See Persha, 1980: 204) As Segundo states quite succinctly, "Being a Christian involves giving up one's life for others - nothing more and nothing less." (Segundo, 1973: 91)

6. An Assessment of Segundo's Ecclesiology

Having explored various facets of Segundo's theology of the Church, we now turn our attention to a discussion of some of its strengths and weaknesses. One of the pluses in Segundo's ecclesiology is that it stresses partiality for poor and oppressed persons as a special focus of the mission of the Church. A minus, however, is that, for the most part, Segundo depicts poor persons as recipients rather than agents of action. A strength in Segundo's theology of the Church is that it affirms God's universal salvific purpose. The universal conception of salvation Segundo finds in the Last Judgment scene in Matt. 25: 31-46. As Segundo understands the text, Jesus is saying to all humanity: "What did you do for me when I was hungry, thirsty, alone, and mistreated?" and he is awarding eternal life to all those who showed true love. (Tripole, 1981: 3) Segundo's point is that God calls all to love. The community that is the Church has no monopoly on grace. Wherever people love one another, God's grace is operative. On the negative side, however, one critic asserts: Once Segundo summarizes his redemptive christology... as the particularizing of universal salvation, he can find nothing left for the church to do but to know this (whereas non-Christians can only live it) and responsibly seek to convey this knowledge to believers. ... The average non-Christian would rightly question Segundo at this point: What difference does it make whether or not I explicitly know I am on the road to salvation in Christ, as long as I live in the life of self-giving on that road? (Tripole, 1981: 11)

Thus, an important question that Segundo's ecclesiology raises is whether or not the Church is necessary, since the "saving process of real love is available in the world in general." (Tripole, 1981: 8) Segundo's response to that question is a definite "yes," inasmuch as he views the Church as a sign community whose role and responsibility is to illuminate, for all people, the inestimable value of love. This being the case, it is also noteworthy that members of the Church do not always act as signs of love in the world. What immediately comes to mind is the still unfolding pedophilia scandal in the Church, which demonstrates its being a counter-sign of love. Segundo's ecclesiology fails to stress the reality of a graced yet sin-prone Church. An additional strength in Segundo's theology is that he looks upon the Church as those who "portray the prophetic way of living the gospel message." (Nealen, 1991: 155) Members of the Church freely commit themselves to a radical life of serving neighbors in need, especially the poorest and most dehumanized. (See Nealen, 1991: 155) Viewed negatively, however, Segundo's minoritarian model of the Church appears elitist or exclusivist. One commentator reflects: "For Segundo, 'minority' tends to be identified with 'real members' [of the Church] and 'mass' [or majority] with inauthentic or non-members." (Nealen, 1991: 155) For Segundo, basic Christian communities play a very important part in the Church's fulfillment of its prophetic role in society. This being the case, Segundo does not, however, fully articulate how and why this is so. Thus, the question remains: In what specific ways are base Christian communities called to make visible, in a clear and bold way, the prophetic nature of the Church in the here-and-now? In his writings, Segundo describes the Church as carrying forward Jesus' Kingdom project of love in the midst of history. This is a strength because it provides a theological basis for a realized as well as future eschatology. In present moments the Church contributes to the growth of the Kingdom while, at the same time, it holds firm to its belief in the future coming-to-be of the fullness of the Kingdom. Finally, while Segundo does an excellent job in emphasizing the Church's outward thrust to the world, he is less successful in pointing out the "internal value, majesty, and effectiveness of the Church's life upon its members."

(Tripole, 1981: 16) Segundo makes a strong case that the Church does not exist primarily for the benefit of its members; that being said, he fails to discuss the importance of prayer and contemplation in the full "theological development of the life of the Christian community." (Nealen, 1991: 156)

Conclusion

Segundo's theology of the Church roots and grounds itself in the Vatican II document *Gaudium et Spes*, which clearly proclaims that the Church exists in the world for the good of the world. In a true spirit of solidarity with poor and exploited persons, the Church continues Jesus' prophetic mission by actively seeking solutions to situations of oppression and injustice. In his ecclesiology, Segundo reiterates *Gaudium et Spes'* assertion that the Church must scrutinize the signs of the times and then act accordingly. (See Segundo, 1973: 126) According to Segundo, the Church has a prominent role to play in promoting integral liberation in the world "by supporting social, economic, and political ideologies that foster humanization." (Ritt, 1988: 243) In essence, the Church is called to be the herald of the good news of liberation. In his theology of the Church, Segundo embraces the biblical image of leaven. For Segundo, as a leaven of love, the Church is meant to be a 'transforming ferment for the rest of humanity.' (Hennelly, 1979: 92) Members of the Church community are called to be extraordinary lovers who act as a ferment of love in the world. By embodying love that builds up humanity in history, the Church advances the evolutionary process and, hence, contributes to the ongoing development of the Kingdom of God on earth.

Works Cited

- Chopp, Rebecca S. (1986). *The Praxis of Suffering: An Interpretation of Liberation and Political Theologies*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.
- Donahue, John R. (1988). *The Gospel in Parables: Metaphor, Narrative and Theology in the Synoptic Gospels*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.
- Gaudium et Spes* in *The Sixteen Documents of Vatican II and the Instruction on the Liturgy*. (1962). Boston: Daughters of St. Paul.
- Haughey, S.J., John C. (1977). "Jesus as the Justice of God." In John C. Haughey (Ed.), *The Faith That Does Justice: Examining the Christian Sources for Social Change* (pp. 269-290). New York: Paulist Press.
- Hennelly, Alfred T. (1982). "Human Rights and Latin American Theology." In Alfred T. Hennelly and John Langan (Eds.), *Human Rights in the Americas* (pp. 25-51). Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.
- Hennelly, Alfred T. (1979). *Theologies in Conflict: The Challenge of Juan Luis Segundo*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.
- Lord, Elizabeth, S.U.S.C. (1989). "Human History and the Kingdom of God: Past Perspectives and Those of Juan Luis Segundo." *The Heythrop Journal*, 30, 293-305.
- Mora, Abdias. (1987). *Praxis and Church in the Theology of Juan Luis Segundo*. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International Dissertations Publishing.
- Nealen, Mary Kaye. (1991). *The Poor in the Ecclesiology of Juan Luis Segundo*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Persha, Gerald. (1980). *Juan Luis Segundo*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.
- Riddel, Roger. (1977). "Part 1: the Liberation of Theology." *Month*, CCXXXVIII, 149-153.
- Ritt, Paul Edward. (1988). *The Lordship of Jesus Christ in the Christologies of Hans Urs Von Balthasar and Juan Luis Segundo*. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International Dissertations Publishing.
- Segundo, Juan Luis. (1988). *An Evolutionary Approach to Jesus of Nazareth*. Trans. John Drury. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.
- Segundo, Juan Luis. (1964). *La Cristiandad, Una Utopia? II: Los Principios*. Montevideo: Mimeografica "Lux".
- Segundo, Juan Luis. (1973). *The Community Called Church*. Trans. John Drury. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.
- Segundo, Juan Luis. (1976). *The Liberation of Theology*. Trans. John Drury. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.
- Segundo, Juan Luis. (1974). *The Sacraments Today*. Trans. John Drury. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.
- Slade, Stanley David. (1979). *The Theological Method of Juan Luis Segundo*. Ph.D. Dissertation: Fuller Theological Seminary.
- Tripole, S.J., Martin Ralph. (1981). "Segundo's Liberation theology Versus an Eschatological Ecclesiology." *Thomist*, 45: 1 – 25.