

**LITERARY AND CINEMATIC
REPRESENTATIONS OF JESUIT MISSIONS
TO THE GUARANÍ OF PARAGUAY, WITH SPECIAL
REFERENCE TO THE FILM AND NOVEL OF 1986, *THE MISSION***

by

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PREFACE

At the University of South Africa a doctoral thesis “should show evidence of original work and constitute a decided contribution to the knowledge of and insight into the subject” about which it is written. The present thesis does so by examining how missionaries and their endeavours, especially the controversial Jesuit *reducciones*, or model communities, for the Guaraní people of Paraguay, have been depicted in a cross-section of literary and cinematic works, focussing on the film and novel of 1986, *The Mission*. In it I have demonstrated how in one case after another writers in various genres have used this chapter of ecclesiastical history as evidence to support their own causes. Surprisingly little of a scholarly nature has previously been written about this general topic, and next to nothing about *The Mission*, despite the great international attention and professional awards which the film received. For that matter, screenwriter Robert Bolt, who earlier had won acclaim for his *A Man for All Seasons* and many other works for the stage and screen, has been the subject of only scant scholarly enquiry.

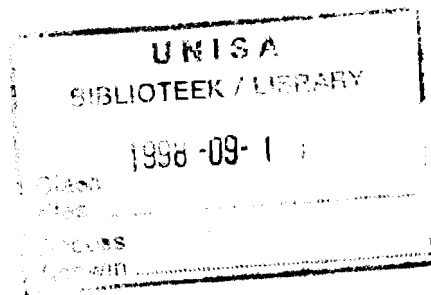
This study could not have been completed without the faithful assistance of many people in academic, ecclesiastical, and other circles in South Africa, Sweden, England, and the United States of America. At the risk of overlooking some of them, I wish to recognise many who have facilitated my research and writing. My cordial promoters at the University of South Africa, Professor Willem Saayman and Professor J.N.J. Kritzinger, readily accepted the task of supervising the creation of this thesis and encouraged my progress on it between 1994 and 1997, both while I was on annual visits in South Africa and during my lengthy stays overseas. I am particularly grateful for their approval of my novel topic and the interdisciplinary approach I have employed in exploring how literary and cinematic artists have portrayed Jesuit and other missions. At the University of Uppsala, where I was a postdoctoral fellow for two extended periods, I enjoyed the friendly support of and many stimulating conversations with other missiologists and postgraduate students of missiology whose diverse range of interests nurtured and to some extent dovetailed with my own.

Stepping back many years along the path of my education, I must express my gratitude to the many scholars at various institutions in South Africa, Norway, and the United States of America who diligently prepared me to undertake this kind of study. Particularly noteworthy in this regard are the men who taught me theology, history, and literary analysis at Harvard University, the University of Oslo, the University of Hamburg, Johns Hopkins University, the University of South Africa, and the University of Natal in Pietermaritzburg. Whatever acumen I have in these disciplines I owe in large measure to them.

Librarians at more than a dozen institutions have facilitated my research in ways far too numerous to list here. I wish to thank especially those at the Universities of South Africa, Cape Town, Uppsala, Oslo, Birmingham, and Minnesota as well as their counterparts at the British Library, the South African Library, Luther Seminary, Concordia College, Macalester College, and the Lake Agassiz Regional Library for their unfailing courtesy and efficient assistance as I ferreted out materials in Swedish, Norwegian, English, German, French, Afrikaans, and Dutch.

The present study is part of a larger project which has focused on the depiction of missions and missionaries in literature and film. It has already yielded articles for several journals in South Africa, India, and the United States of America. I wish to thank the editors of *Missionalia*, *Religion and Theology*, *Journal of Military History*, *Scandinavian Studies*, and *The Griot* for co-operating with me in this expansion of the frontiers of scholarship.

In accordance with the requirements of the University of South Africa, I declare that this thesis is my own work.



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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The Expanding Parameters and Sources of Missiology

During the latter half of the twentieth century, one internationally recognised truism in the field of missiology, especially in various European countries, North America, and South Africa, has been that its parameters have continued to expand as a broader diversity of scholars and other individuals have sunk their ploughs into its fertile soil. To cite but a few examples of this evolution of the discipline, investigations of such topics as liberation theology, proselytism not merely of but also by non-Christians, cross-cultural traditional healing, and feminism have either germinated in or been transplanted to it and yielded a cornucopia of theses, monographs, and shorter studies. There is scant reason to believe that the development of missiology will not continue in diverse directions during the twenty-first century.

Few factors have contributed more heavily or significantly to this general maturation than the willingness of missiologists to pay serious attention to a broader range of sources than was hitherto the case. Nowhere is this more clearly illustrated than in the historical study of missions. Until well into the twentieth century, historians of the expansion of Christianity since the proliferation of Protestant missionary societies after about 1790 relied largely on missionaries' own testimonies and those of their sponsoring organisations. Such documents as letters and reports from mission fields, protocols of board meetings, articles culled from the yellowed and brittle pages of ecclesiastical magazines, memoirs, and published descriptions of missions used for deputation purposes long formed the backbone of historical research. Archivalia from colonial offices often supplemented these witnesses. These various conventional sources, it should be emphasised, have shed an enormous amount of light on previously tenebrous corners of the subject. All sources are imperfect channels of truth, however, and the subjectivity of those just mentioned becomes obvious when one realises that they almost invariably convey to readers the history of missions as refracted through the prisms of cultural captivity, missionary motivation, and other tendentious factors.

Owing partly to an awareness of these innate limitations, in recent years historians and missiologists alike have increasingly taken long-neglected sources into account. Perhaps most fruitfully, they have paid greater attention to the voices of the evangelised peoples. Black Africans, Native Americans, and other targeted groups have thereby told much which complements - but does not necessarily confirm or contradict - the story which emerges from the missionaries' own perspectives. Whether Christian or non-Christian, enthusiastic about or resistant to this religion propagated in their midst, their voices have spoken loudly and often clearly. Again, of course, problems of reliability loom large. No more than the missionaries themselves have the people whom they have evangelised held a claim to omniscience or infallibility, nor are their testimonies examples of supposed Rankean objectivity.

To a lesser degree in some quarters, the works of literary scholars, cinematographers, and other artists have also been recognised for their potential value to research on our understanding of the global missionary enterprise. Ever since Luke wrote the Acts of the Apostles, Christian evangelism across national frontiers and cultural borders has been a recurrent theme in Western literature, and during the nineteenth century it has occupied a growing place in both "canonical" and "non-canonical" works of fiction. That this is the case is hardly surprising when one considers some of the powerful themes which are inherent in the broad subject, *e.g.* the clash of cultures, the predicament of converts caught between the worlds of their families and that of the expanding church, and the participation, intentional or incidental, of missionaries in imperialism. Going a step further, since the 1920s problems involving foreign missions have also cropped up as recurrent themes in feature films as producers and screenwriters have understood the possibilities which certain aspects of missionary life - or, in far too many cases, caricatures of it in popular perceptions - offer for depiction on the silver screen.

One illustrative example of scholarly mining of this potentially rich lode is Samuel Tinyiko Maluleke's recent study of Tsonga literature, in which this emerging South African missiologist examined ethnic literary works as "a commentary on missionary Christianity" (particularly that propagated by Swiss Reformed missionaries), "a source of and challenge to missiology", and "a source of a Black missiology of liberation". Maluleke argued cogently that collectively the texts he

considered constituted a legitimate and enlightening witness from an “independent and *under-side*” viewpoint.¹

Purpose of the Present Study

In the present study it is my intention to make a contribution to scholarly understanding of certain aspects of missionary Christianity as seen from various external viewpoints by exploring the presentation of missions and missionaries in selected literary and cinematographic works, focussing primarily on those which have depicted the controversial history of the Society of Jesus in South America during the eighteenth century. There is much from which to choose. Within the very broad, international, and interdenominational historical movement of Christian missions, Jesuit undertakings have frequently caught the creative eye. Controversial virtually from its inception in the sixteenth century, the Society of Jesus long ago gained a reputation for its willingness to engage in disputes which had both ecclesiastical and political ramifications. Coupled with its grand missionary undertaking in the New World, this fortitude brought both the leadership of the order and its large number of missionaries into conflict with colonial authorities in North and South America as well as with several of the royal courts of the colonising powers in Europe. Eventually, in the middle of the eighteenth century, Jesuit missions inescapably became entangled in the temporarily successful campaign to suppress the Society of Jesus internationally, and many fell victim to it. Both before and after that was accomplished, *littérateurs* exploited the reputation of the order for being a dynamic force, one which could add an explosive dimension to their works. Consequently, the annals of fiction offers many examples of literary exploitation of Jesuit history.

Particularly striking is how frequently this has been used propagandistically. Accordingly, a pivotal theme in the present thesis is how literary artists and cinematographers have utilised Jesuit missions history, especially the controversial forced closure of the order’s missions in South America during the eighteenth century, as rhetorical ammunition to be fired in contemporary disputes. Again and again, when historians, dramatists, novelists, and film producers have described this

contentious chapter in the history of the Society of Jesus, they have not pursued the unattainable goal of objective detachment but quite explicitly used it as an historical example to support whatever cause they were supporting, *e.g.* anti-imperialism, opposition to free trade, the campaign against fascism and the abandonment of religio-ethical responsibility which accompanied it, and liberation theology.

Methodology

The foundation on which this study is built is interdisciplinary, incorporating several dimensions of my diverse background in theology, history, ethics, and literary studies. I do not fit neatly into any one school of missiological interpretation, and by no means does everything I have done in the field of missiology, or even in the present study, stand in one missiological tradition. Nevertheless, it should be stated that although the particular subject is a novel one, the methodology employed entails fairly conventional and uncomplicated approaches of primarily historical and literary criticism in examining the films and books under consideration. In most cases, I have sought to identify the underlying concerns of the individual authors in question, then proceeded to elucidate how certain emphases and nuances in their works correspond to and are used to support those concerns. In terms of the missiological issues involved, this study reflects an interest in the history of how missions and missionaries have been presented to a broad public of readers and cinema-goers, particularly in Europe and North America, both to people who support the endeavours depicted in print or on the screen and their neighbours who are either indifferent or hostile to the proliferation of Christianity across national and cultural lines. No attempt is made to take sides with the agenda or intentions of any one author under consideration, nor is there any noteworthy conscious alignment with any of the several schools of thought or attitudinal positions represented.

A long-standing personal and professional bias towards conventional history based on extensive examination of primary documents is readily admitted. To illustrate the point, if I am confronted with contradictions in two texts, one of which rests explicitly on primary research and the other on secondary materials or is not documented at all, like nearly every other professional historian I almost invariably

put my trust in the former as being closer to the truth, although not necessarily without reserve, and dismiss the latter as probably erroneous, or in any case less reliable, unless there is compelling reason to do otherwise.

As one also schooled in literary studies and closely related disciplines, however, I approached the texts and films under consideration with the awareness that they are all attempted reconstructions of the historical events which they purport to describe. As such they are inescapably incomplete pictures, in most cases mere glimpses of the events they ostensibly reflect. One cannot reasonably expect more from them. Furthermore, upon reading and viewing these central subjects of my research as well as such ancillary documents as interviews with several of the authors in question and other people, it became evident that the research on which they based their texts varied greatly. In some instances it was undoubtedly very thin. Fritz Hochwalder, for example, was compelled to rely largely on one book about the history of the Jesuits while he was living in exile in Switzerland during the Second World War. Voltaire appears to have depended chiefly on contemporary propaganda about the Society of Jesus, much of it unabashedly calumnious. Neither of these men set foot in South America before undertaking to write about Jesuit missions on that continent. By contrast, R.B. Cunninghame Graham spent several years there and visited the sites of many mission stations before beginning his history of the *reducciones*. Conscious of some of the limitations which these and other authors placed on themselves, and also aware of the agendas which they had advocated, I combed their writings about Jesuit missions to determine how they had represented them and how these representations harmonised with contemporary issues on which the men in question, all of whom were politically very active or had suffered political persecution, and all of whom apparently saw something in the saga of Jesuit missions to the Guaran that appeared to support their causes, had taken positions.

In places my background in Christian ethics has also shaped my methodology, though to a much lesser degree. Much of my specific use of meta-ethical concepts occurs in my analysis of Robert Bolt's treatment of crucial moral dilemmas which confronted individual Jesuits during the 1750s when their missionary endeavour was caught in the stultifying web of political machinations which accompanied Spanish and Portuguese colonisation in South America and their order was enduring extreme pressure in Europe. In this regard, I have explored *inter alia* differing

Christian attitudes towards issues of peace and violence as well as the perennial question of teleological vs. deontological ethics.

It perhaps need not be emphasised that this study encompasses literary and cinematic works representing several genres and that the points of departure and the concerns of their creators differed markedly. Consequently, rather than imposing an artificial symmetry on them by adopting a uniform mode of evaluation, I have sought to address their unique characteristics individually, paying especial attention to their varying emphases. For example, in my consideration of Hochwalder's dramatic interpretation of the closure of the Jesuit missions in South America, I devote space to significant differences between the German text of *Das heilige Experiment* and the English adoption of it which led indirectly to Bolt's script for *The Mission*. In Cunninghame Graham's *A Vanished Arcadia*, more attention is appropriately paid to his consideration of economic issues, while individual moral dilemmas are necessarily foci of the treatment of Bolt's screenplay and novelisation. That there is nevertheless some overlapping in the analysis of the various works will be obvious.

The scepticism which arose early in my involvement in this project never fully abated, but gradually I came to the realisation that the woefully inadequate research which most of the writers in question had conducted and the fact that they had exploited their subject for political and other contemporary ends did not diminish the potential value of such genres as drama and film for the study of missions. We live in an era when the power of explicit visual imagery often surpasses that of either the spoken word or written texts both to motivate and to inform. Perhaps no-one was better aware of that than a screenwriter like Bolt, although it should also be emphasised, as I have sought to do in my comparisons of the film and the novel *The Mission*, that the printed word has not entirely capitulated to the cinema. This is not, of course, to understate the immense potential for both deliberate and gross unintentional misrepresentation of missions history on the screen. Illustrating this last-named realisation, I have pointed out some of the most glaring discrepancies between what is depicted in the film *The Mission* and what can be established from various, and probably less derivative, accounts. In accordance with my personal and professional bias delineated above, in such cases I give the nod to the latter

and regard the apparently erroneous elements in the film as unnecessary weaknesses, though in some instances thought-provoking ones.

It also became evident that the study of certain films could serve the interests of serious missiological enquiry by stimulating theological reflection on such vital issues as attitudes towards ethnic groups, the indigenisation of the Gospel, and relations between church and state. It is accordingly argued in the concluding chapter that a case can be made for ongoing serious study of the representation of missions in the cinema.

Personal Stance

Although this is to a great degree a study of underlying motives in writers' treatment of Jesuit missions in South America, it is not intended to promote a particular political or theological agenda. This is not, of course, to say that I have approached the subject as a completely disinterested observer or that I lack biases with regard to the moral, political, economic, and other issues which deeply concerned the writers whom I discuss. To a considerable extent I share, for example, Cunninghame Graham's critical attitude towards imperialism, Bolt's pacifism, and Hochwalder's concern about the moral responsibility of religious leaders when confronted by totalitarianism. I am greatly concerned about the debilitating effects which the intrusion of European civilisation has had on the indigenous peoples of the Americas, although most of my considerable exposure to and interaction with Native Americans has been in the Northern Hemisphere. Accordingly, I cannot claim any expertise in the history or present condition of the Guaran people of Paraguay. To believe that my prejudices in these and other respects have not crept into the present study would, presumably, be quite nave. Furthermore, it is only fair to disclose something of my reactions to the specifically religious matter at hand. I am neither a Jesuit nor a member of the Roman Catholic Church and have approached the subject quite unobliged either to that religious community or that Christian denomination. I am, however, a Christian, one who has great respect for much of the legacy of the men and women who for nearly two millennia have transformed this once messianic movement within Judaism into a world religion

with vast numbers of adherents on all continents. To be sure, my attitude towards this expansion is qualified by my cognizance as a church historian and missiologist of many of the mistakes - theological, political, anthropological, strategic, and otherwise - which missionaries have made with regard to such crucial matters as their perceptions of technologically less advanced peoples, exploitation of relations between church and state, both unwitting and conscious support of imperialism, and attempts to coerce people either by the sword or through more subtle means into accepting Christianity as their religion. With regard to the intrinsic worth and ethical defensibility of the *reducciones*, or model communities which the Jesuits developed amongst the Guaraní during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, I cannot have more than a tentative position, chiefly because I have not done the extensive original research on them which would allow me to arrive at a conclusive one. Compounding the difficulty, my analysis of the literary and cinematic depictions of these *reducciones* has underscored the necessity of taking these derivative, secondary works about them *cum grano salis*. That said, I should emphasise my conviction that the communities in question were clearly morally superior to the enslavement and other forms of exploitation which European colonisation inflicted on indigenous peoples and simultaneously stress my perception that the Jesuits who administered them held, perhaps unwittingly, typically condescending and paternalistic attitudes which militated against indigenous ecclesiastical leadership or even the founding of churches which could readily survive the coerced withdrawal of the Society of Jesus from its mission fields during the eighteenth century.

Turning to the film and the books which are the focal points of this study, I can happily report that I initially regarded *The Mission* as in many respects one of the most impressive works for the screen I had ever viewed. Approximately twenty subsequent viewings, however, in tandem with repeated critical readings of dozens of reviews of it written in several languages and from various political and theological viewpoints, tempered my initial enthusiasm and compelled me to qualify my general opinion. Certain aspects of the film began to strike me as weaknesses for a variety of theological, historical, or artistic reasons, while my respect for much of the underlying message simultaneously increased. True to my prejudices as a literary scholar, I found Bolt's novelisation - if that it may justifiably be called - of his screenplay generally superior to the uneven quality of the film.

Indeed, it is my firm conviction that that book merits much more detailed analysis than the limits of the present study have allowed me to undertake thus far.

Related Scholarly Literature

Much of what is discussed in the present study is virgin ground, or nearly so. To be sure, literary and film critics have devoted a moderate amount of attention to some of the subtopics which are related to our theme, such as the film *Hawaii* and James Michener's weighty historical novel on which it is based. Turning to our more central concerns, however, Robert Bolt and his works for the stage and the screen have received surprisingly scant scholarly notice, particularly when one considers the immense amount of international popularity which some of them have enjoyed since the 1950s. The filming of *The Mission*, for example, was the subject of various short articles during the mid-1980s as director Roland Joffé discussed with one critic after another certain episodes in his creation of that film and on occasion commented on the influence which his understanding of liberation theology and Bolt's political views had on both the reshaping of the script and various modifications in the filming of it. Before the end of the decade, however, both public and critical interest in *The Mission* were virtually moribund. One can safely assume that Bolt's rich and varied literary *corpus* will eventually attract far more attention than it has to date. When one searches standard bibliographies of literary criticism one finds precious little which pertains directly to this highly talented writer.

Turning to the larger field of religious themes in the cinema, one can reap a notably more abundant harvest, but again scholars have done little more than pluck a few fruits from it. One can thus turn to such books, many of them now dated, as Ronald Holloway's *Beyond the Image: Approaches to the Religious Dimension in the Cinema*,² Thomas Martin's *Images and the Imageless: A Study in Religious Consciousness and Film*,³ and *Religion and Film* by John R. May and Michael Bird⁴ to gain some general impressions of how cinematographers have employed aspects of this broad phenomenon in films. To date, however, very little of a theoretical nature has been written about the depiction of Christian foreign

missions in feature films. The subject of the present study is intended as one small step towards filling that *lacuna*.

Structure of the Present Study

The twin focal points of this study are the feature film of 1986 *The Mission* and screenwriter Robert Bolt's novelisation of his script, which was published that year under the same title. Both of these works lucidly embody Bolt's progressive political views with regard to late twentieth-century political and economic issues and thus my the central argument hand-in-glove. The scope of the study, however, is significantly broader.

We shall begin with a chapter which will provide a fairly detailed historical account of Jesuit missions to the Guaraní people during the seventeenth and eighteenth century as constructed from conventional historical sources. It is not assumed that such a consensus account is an objective device for testing the veracity of the more artistic works under consideration. No claims of inerrancy can be made for secondary historical accounts, regardless of whether there is a consensus of scholarly opinion that they are generally reliable. In harmony with this disclaimer, it should be emphasised that this historical survey is not intended to serve as a touchstone for assaying the veracity of the literary and cinematic recreations of the historic Jesuit missions to the Guaraní, at least not in any categorical sense.

In three individual chapters, we shall consider an equal number of writers representing several countries whose treatment of the historic Jesuit missionary endeavour in Paraguay also illustrates the pivotal theme. The first of these is François-Marie Arouet, popularly known as Voltaire, the pre-eminent French Enlightenment scholar who in the middle of the eighteenth century pilloried the Society of Jesus as part of the international campaign for the suppression of that religious order in his well-known novel *Candide* but subsequently argued strongly in his *Essai sur les mœurs* that the Jesuits had handled the indigenes of Paraguay beneficently.

Secondly, we shall consider *A Vanished Utopia*, the popular history of the Jesuit mission model communities, or *reducciones*, by the Scottish Labourite politician

and man of letters Robert B. Cunninghame Graham. A co-founder with James Keir Hardie of the British Labour Party and briefly a controversial Member of Parliament, Cunninghame Graham was deeply involved in many political issues of his day. Among other questions, he staunchly opposed imperialism, advocated the economic interests of the working class, and resisted international free trade. All of these and other Labourite positions crop up in *A Vanished Utopia* as uncamouflaged historic evidence in support of the causes which Cunninghame Graham was championing.

The third is Fritz Hochwalder, who as a Viennese Jewish refugee in Switzerland during the Second World War wrote *Das heilige Experiment*, a tragedy which was subsequently enthusiastically received in theatres in Europe, the Americas, and elsewhere. This drama, the English version of which was titled *The Strong Are Lonely*, directly inspired the creation of the film *The Mission*. Hochwalder, intimately aware of both the restrictions on religious freedom which National Socialism had brought and the failure of some major religious organisations in Europe to raise a prophetic voice against the rise and expansion of that Fascist movement, explored in *Das heilige Experiment* moral ramifications of the closure of the Jesuit missions in South America during the 1750s.

Missionaries and their propagation of Christianity were central themes in the cinema for more than half a century before *The Mission* was produced. In Chapter Six we shall appraise a representative cross-section of films in which this was the case. It will be seen that several caricatures of missionaries have arisen in the cinema. This survey provides essential contextual background for our consideration of *The Mission*, in which some of the Jesuits are portrayed in quasi-stereotypical terms while others are unique characters who embody Bolt's ideals. It also serves as a partial framework for analysing the portrayal of missionaries in other films.

The Mission reflects the influence of liberation theology on its creators. Chapter Seven will accordingly include a brief discussion of the origins and development of liberation theology, especially in its Latin American forms as manifested in the works of such people as Gustavo Gutierrez and Leonardo Boff. Particular attention will be paid here to the internationally publicised confrontation between the Vatican and liberation theologians during the mid-1980s when *The Mission* was on the verge of being filmed. A focal point of this chapter is the vexing

issue of the moral legitimacy or illegitimacy of violence in the struggle for political and economic liberation in Latin America.

Our attention then turns to the film *The Mission* and its immediate background. One assumption in this study, which illustrates our grounding in historical criticism rather than, for example, that of structuralism or deconstruction, is that a consideration of the author of a text can contribute markedly to an understanding of its meaning. In Chapter Eight we shall therefore examine closely some of the political and religious viewpoints of screenwriter Robert Bolt which helped to determine the content of *The Mission*. Bolt was a faintly religious if nontheistic socialist whose political views left profound imprints on his screenplays. This chapter will be essentially a discussion of his own life and the unfolding of those political positions. It will also include brief discussions of how some of Bolt's earlier scripts illustrate moral dilemmas which recur in *The Mission*.

The production of this film proved particularly challenging as it was done chiefly under physically demanding conditions in Colombia and Argentina. It also embodied a widely heralded score by the eminent Italian composer Ennio Morricone and featured award-winning cinematography by veteran British cameraman Chris Menges. The international, multi-ethnic cast included well-known stars like Robert De Niro and Jeremy Irons as well as Colombian tribal people who had no previous experience before the film camera but whose contribution to the work caught the attention of many reviewers. All of these factors left their mark on *The Mission* and accordingly are described in Chapter Nine. Parts of this appropriately brief chapter arguably depart from the central thesis of the present study, but they are nevertheless relevant and of value for understanding some of the enormous difficulties encountered in creating a cinematic representation of the ideas and agenda of a screenwriter and director. It also forms an indispensable bridge to the following chapter, in which the theme of theological influence comes to the fore.

The special role of Daniel Berrigan, S.J., a prominent American theologian, poet, playwright, and political activist who served as an advisor on spiritual matters in the production of *The Mission*, will be examined in Chapter Ten. Berrigan's book about the topic, *The Mission: A Film Journal*, will be analysed as another example of the venerable tradition of using the history of the Jesuit undertaking in South America as rhetorical ammunition for contemporary causes.

Central issues in *The Mission* as it appeared as a film will be explored at length in Chapter Eleven. They will encompass but not be limited to such conflicts as the confrontation between pacifist and militant forms of Christian activism, relations between church and state, and the moral dilemma which confronted the papal emissary Luis Altamirano in his rôle in the closure of the *reducciones*. Attention will also be paid to the cinematic representation of ethnic characters, as this reflects an ongoing and pivotal theme in missiology generally. It will be apparent that much in the film reflects Bolt's progressive political agenda and that in some respects *The Mission* is a cinematic justification of liberation theology, which by the mid-1980s was gaining international public attention, not least because of the confrontation between theological conservatives in the Vatican on the one hand and Latin American liberationist theologians on the other.

Chapter Twelve is a detailed consideration of Bolt's novelisation of *The Mission*. That book, published in 1986 presumably to capitalise on the vast international publicity which the film was receiving, is regarded here as a serious literary work which in terms of artistic merit and intellectual standing looms far above most other novelisations of feature films. In many respects it differs significantly from the film on the same topic, however, and our consideration will highlight many of those differences, particularly with regard to the three principal characters in both works. Nevertheless, the book, no less than the film, underscores the theme of how retrospective portrayals of Jesuit missions in South America have been shaped to serve contemporary rhetorical purposes.

A final major chapter is devoted to the international reception of the film *The Mission*. (Because the novelisation does not appear to have been seriously reviewed, no parallel analysis of critical responses to it has been attempted.) This survey encompasses a representative cross-section of reviews published both secular and religious newspapers and magazines in Britain, Europe, North America, and South Africa.

In the brief concluding chapter, we shall summarise our principal findings, relate them to the overarching thesis of rhetorically purposeful representation of eighteenth-century Jesuit missions in South America, and propose avenues for further research into and employment of the cinema as a medium of expression for Christian missions.

Notes

1. Samuel Tinyiko Maluleke, "‘A Morula Tree Between Two Fields.’ The Commentary of Selected Tsonga Writers On Missionary Christianity" (Doctor of Theology thesis, University of South Africa, 1995), unpaginated Summary and p. 1.
2. Ronald Holloway, *Beyond the Image: Approaches to the Religious Dimension in the Cinema* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1977).
3. Thomas M. Martin, *Images and the Imageless: A Study in Religious Consciousness and Film* (East Brunswick, New Jersey: Associated University Presses, 1981).
4. John R. May and Michael Bird, *Religion in Film* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1982).

CHAPTER TWO

THE *REDUCCIONES*, THEIR HISTORY, AND THEIR HISTORIOGRAPHY

Introduction

One of the themes of the present study, as stated in the Introduction, is that when authors and filmmakers have portrayed the Jesuit missionary undertaking amongst the Guaraní people they have not merely sought to write or depict objective history as that has been generally understood in the twentieth century. Instead, they have almost invariably come either to bury or to praise the work of the Society of Jesus. The groundbreaking Italian historian Lodovico Antonio Muratori, to whom the Jesuits could do practically no wrong, was a lucid example of the latter in the eighteenth century, while a few decades later Bernardo Ibañez de Echavarri typified the vilifying former approach in his highly tendentious history of the *reducciones* in Paraguay which was published, either in its entirety or in part, in Italian, Spanish, German, and France during the campaign to suppress the Society of Jesus and after enemies of the Order achieved that goal. Furthermore, the literary and cinematographic treatments in question have been purposeful in another context, as well. Their creators have tended to be present-minded and use the Jesuit experience in Latin America, including its forced closure in the 1760s, as evidence to support the positions they have taken on contemporary issues, such as imperialism, capitalism, free trade, liberation theology, or the Society of Jesus itself. Intimately related to this, unsavoury connotations have burdened the noun "Jesuit" and, more so, the adjective "Jesuitical", almost from the inception of the Society of Jesus, exacerbating the task of writing dispassionately and objectively about the order and its functions.

In order to understand better the manifestations of these general phenomena that we shall discuss in subsequent chapters, in the present one we shall seek to present a disinterested and dispassionate survey of the pertinent history of the Jesuits as an order and particularly of their missions amongst the Guaraní, as that history emerges from conventional surveys of the topic. To be sure, this immediately brings to life the issue of the possibility of presenting a fair historical portrait of the Society

of Jesus and its work without undertaking extensive archival research in seventeenth and eighteenth-century materials, a task which lies outside the scope of this study. If the *littérateurs* and filmmakers whose work we shall criticise have tended to present unreliable portrayals, can one rely on the various books and articles that have flowed from the pens of such twentieth-century historians as René Fülöp-Miller, William V. Bangert, David J. Mitchell, J.C.H. Aveling, C.J. McNaspy, and Philip Caraman? A response to that question involves an acknowledgement that not all the men whose works have been used in the compiling of the following historical sketch are disinterested observers. Indeed, at least one of these books, that by Bangert, was published by the Institute for Jesuit Sources, and several of the men whose historical studies we are synthesising are or were members of the Society of Jesus. The cardinal point, however, is that we are not attempting to recreate unadulterated historical Truth as a touchstone for assaying the veracity of the literary and cinematic portrayals which we shall consider.

At the end of the present chapter we shall briefly consider how historians and others writing under the aegis of liberation theology have described the Jesuit *reducciones*. This is intended not merely to illustrate the relativity of historical analysis but also to form a transitional bridge between our treatment of conventional accounts and portrayals whose tendentiousness is candidly acknowledged.

The Origins and Purpose of the Society of Jesus

About the establishment and original purposes of the Society of Jesus there is general consensus. The founder of the order was Ignatius of Loyola, whose name is revered in Jesuit tradition and despised by the enemies of the Society which he and his colleagues began. Born in Loyola, Castile, in 1491, this youngest son of a nobleman became a page in a wealthy family of relatives and subsequently a knight in another related family. Ignatius suffered life-threatening injuries while participating in the defence of Pamplona against the French in 1521. During his lengthy convalescence he underwent a profound and pivotal spiritual experience. Among other things, Ignatius read extensively in hagiographic literature, lived briefly as a mendicant, scourged himself in penance, engaged in hours of prayer daily in a cave near Mansera

not far from Barcelona, and, reflecting his own religious awakening, wrote his influential *Spiritual Exercises*. His travels during the early 1520s took him to *inter alia* Rome and Jerusalem.

This was a period of great religious upheaval in Europe. Martin Luther had presented his *Ninety-five Theses* in 1517 and was translating the New Testament into German at the Wartburg while Ignatius underwent his awakening. Protestantism had spread from parts of Germany into Switzerland and aroused the curiosity of inquiring minds in France, Scandinavia, and elsewhere, although the new movement never made significant headway in Spain. Within the Roman Catholic Church, however, there were noteworthy stirrings, prompted in part by the spirit of the Renaissance which motivated scholars like Erasmus of Rotterdam to challenge accepted doctrines and practices. Relations between church and state, moreover, were also being realigned in one country or principality after another, both in Catholic and Protestant areas.

Ignatius drank deeply from certain aspects of the spirit of his times, not least with regard to the re-emphasis they placed on education. He studied for several years in Spain before proceeding in 1528 to Paris, where he eventually received the degree *Magister Artium*. During his Parisian years Ignatius gathered a band of religious companions, together with whom he took private religious vows of poverty, obedience, and chastity in 1534. As one of their declared purposes they pledged to pursue ministerial work in the Holy Land. The most influential of these comrades was his fellow Spaniard, Francisco Xavier, who would eventually become one of the most successful missionaries in the history of the Society of Jesus, or, for that matter, Christianity in general. The affirmants did not constitute a recognised order at that time, nor had any of them entered the priesthood. Most were ordained in 1537 in Venice, however. Their hope of making a pilgrimage to Jerusalem fell victim to a war then raging between Venice and the Ottoman Empire, which then encompassed most of the Middle East. On Christmas Day of the following year Ignatius celebrated Mass for the first time in Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome. He would spend most of the rest of his life in the Eternal City.

The official establishment of the Society of Jesus took place in stages. Ignatius and his closest followers took an important step in the governance of their proto-order in 1539 by adding a vow of obedience to a superior whom they themselves would

elect. In his encyclical *Regimini militantis Ecclesiae* published the following year, Pope Paul III approved this structure, although he initially limited membership in the Society of Jesus to sixty men. This ceiling was lifted four years later. Ignatius was elected its first general. The new organisation, which has always had its headquarters in Rome, grew quite rapidly. When Ignatius died in 1556, it comprised nearly 1 000 men. Less than a decade later there were some 3 500 Jesuits, and by 1626 no fewer than 15 544. Numerical expansion then decelerated, although the order continued to grow somewhat for several more decades. Ignatius considered but eventually decided against establishing a branch for women. Almost from the outset the Society of Jesus was divided into provinces, some of which reflected the imperial expansion of Spain and Portugal into the Americas. It has always been highly centralised, and the rules governing the order have emphasised discipline and authority. Born in a pre-democratic time, the Society of Jesus has never found it prudent to adapt its polity to correspond to liberal ideological tendencies. This, as we shall see, made a deep impression on its missionary endeavours in South America, as did a special vow of obedience to the Pope. Owing to this, members of the order have often tended to regard themselves as partly independent of the diocesan structure of the Roman Catholic Church and responsible directly to the general in Rome and to the Vatican, not necessarily in that order. Indeed, at times there have been very serious tensions between the two institutions.

Several other characteristics did likewise. One of the most inclusive of these was the willingness of the order, in the interest of mobility and adaptability, to depart from certain conventional religious practices while adopting others. The Jesuits, as members of the order soon came to be called in a term that was originally derisive and never completely rid itself of its negative connotations, do not wear a distinctive habit but normally wear that of the secular clergy wherever they are active. Furthermore, individuals vow to do missionary work wherever they are ordered to do so. They do not have choral recitation of the Divine Office or engage in regular penances or obligatory fasts. It is utterly significant to the present study that from an early stage the Jesuits have evinced a willingness to engage in fresh and sometimes innovative forms of ministry, an attitude which obviously proved valuable in the New World. Furthermore, the great emphasis placed on the education of members of the Society of Jesus both manifested itself in the forms of ministry

which these priests and lay brothers undertook and exposed them to such developments as Baroque music and architecture. Indeed, although Ignatius did not intend to establish a teaching order, the urging of the Pope and numerous other bishops as well as the needs of the times influenced the Jesuits in that direction virtually *ab initio*. Their most celebrated educational institution was founded as the Roman College before the death of Ignatius. It evolved into the renowned Gregorian University. Hundreds of other schools, colleges, and universities followed around the world wherever the Society of Jesus established a bridgehead. Finally, it should be noted that despite the strong Spanish element in the order, its membership has always been international and polyglot. This, too, facilitated its penetration beyond the established pale of Christendom.

In theory, the purpose of the order is broadly expressed in its motto, *ad majorem Dei gloriam* - "to the greater glory of God". This foundational expression, of course, has allowed a great range of interpretations. In practice, the Society of Jesus has always maintained strong interests in foreign missions and educational endeavours. It also gained a reputation early on as a chief instrument of the Vatican for winning back areas lost to the Protestant Reformation and for combatting Jansenism, an unorthodox theological current within the Roman Catholic Church. No more than any other religious organisation, however, has this order ever operated in a vacuum. As we have emphasised, in its formative years it was a product of its times. Hence, any discussion of its purpose of serving Christianity on a global basis must take into account what was meant by Christian service in a given place and time. Men who joined the Society of Jesus brought with them a variety of prejudices, national interests, secular loyalties, occupational skills, and other individual interests which enriched its work but were not always homogenised under the strict discipline and rigorous training required for membership.

Roman Catholic Missionary Endeavours in Latin America

As early as the 1540s Jesuits, most notably Francisco Xavier, began to propagate the Gospel in Asia and Africa as one of their primary vocations. Owing to their endeavours, Christianity gained footholds in parts of India, China, Japan,

and other countries of the former continent. Africa, which until the early Middle Ages had more Christians than Europe, attracted fewer Jesuits at that time.

Because of the flourishing of Spanish and Portuguese imperialism, however, it was in Latin America that the Society of Jesus made its greatest impact as a missionary body. Eventually this order had more men and missions in that part of the world than did any other. Indeed, the geographical scope of Jesuit missionary work in the New World stretched from Canada to the southern tip of South America in one of the most remarkable and, at least when gauged quantitatively, temporarily successful undertakings in the history of Christianity.

It should be emphasised that by the end of the fifteenth century Spain and Portugal nominally controlled nearly all of what history too broadly calls "Latin America", from Tierra del Fuego at the southern tip of South America to California in the north. Neither Madrid nor Lisbon ever succeeded in the impossible task of fully subduing the dozens of ethnic groups in their empires or establishing complete administrative control over these vast regions. They did, however, manage to destroy the Inca, Aztec, and various other cultures, exploit millions of indigenous human beings as slaves, concubines, and in other forms of servitude for economic gain, dispossess people of their lands, and impose their uninvited and often brutal rule on native inhabitants, many of whom were culturally in the Stone Age when the Europeans arrived.

The Spanish and Portuguese empires frequently clashed over various border and economic disputes which lasted virtually until most of their American colonies gained independence in the nineteenth century. Attempts to regulate the strife began as early as 1493 when Pope Alexander VI decreed in his Bull of Demarcation that Portugal and Spain would share the New World along lines which he personally decided. In essence, the former kingdom received what became Brazil as its chief colony in the Americas, while the latter realm obtained most of the rest. This did not prove to be a satisfactory solution, however, and warfare and diplomatic negotiation alternatively continued to shift colonial borders for well over two centuries. These modifications of the lines on the maps of the New World would affect the work of many missionaries, including, as we shall see shortly, some of the Jesuits who toiled amongst the Guaraní.

Practically from the outset, therefore, the Roman Catholic Church was involved in the conquest of the Americas. Given its close links to both the Spanish and Portuguese crowns, this was almost inevitable. The activity of the church in this regard appeared to lend its blessing to imperialism, a charge which was at least partially true. Indeed, from an early date the papacy voiced approval of the Iberian kingdoms' conquest of the New World, and in a council of churchmen and royal officials held in 1503 supported the developing course of imperial events. Few Europeans, either in the church or in various governments, expressed opposition to Spanish and Portuguese rule of much of the Americas at that time. By 1511 a Dominican priest named Antonio Montesino began to preach against the severity of Spanish rule on the island of Española and argue that imperialism as such was illegitimate, because the native population of that island was quite capable of governing itself. A commission appointed by King Ferdinand to investigate these charges did little but confirm existing practices, such as the *encomienda-doctrina* system discussed below.

The principal voice of protest at this early stage was that of Bartolomé de Las Casas (1474-1566), a Spanish Dominican missionary in Venezuela, Mexico, and elsewhere who gained a reputation as a gadfly defender of indigenes' rights and is still remembered in Latin America today.¹ He began his career in the New World as an *encomendero* but soon became disgusted with the inhumanity of this system and devoted much of his life to criticising and reforming it. Las Casas became a Dominican in 1523. Both before and after taking his vows he sailed repeatedly back to Spain to protest against abuses of the *encomienda-doctrina* system of compulsory labour. Owing to his remonstrations, that system became somewhat more closely regulated during the 1540s, but it remained an exploitative and much abused tool in the hands of white colonists. By and large, however, men like Montesino and Las Casas were voices crying in the wilderness. For all their dedication and self-sacrifice, early missionaries in the Spanish and Portuguese colonies undeniably co-operated with the imposition of European hegemony on the indigenous populations of those areas.

By no means were the Jesuits the first to propagate the Roman Catholic version of the Gospel in the New World or to establish missions there, a crucial distinction which will become apparent in our discussion of these matters. Generally

speaking, Franciscans preceded their counterparts in the Society of Jesus. As early as 1493 Franciscans following in the wake of Christopher Columbus' landing at Santo Domingo, and by the end of the fifteenth century they had effected approximately 3 000 conversions. This was the first significant missionary undertaking in the Americas. The Franciscan province of Santa Cruz was created in 1505 on the island of Española. It served as a staging area for the expansion of the order's apostolate throughout the Caribbean, particularly Puerto Rico and Cuba. Franciscans reached northern South America by 1514, and their work on that continent and Central America spread quickly to what are now Colombia, Panama, Nicaragua, Ecuador, and, by the 1530s, Peru, where the Province of the Twelve Apostles was established at Lima as an administrative centre in the 1550s, when the order first undertook work in Chile. Further Franciscan penetrations into South America reached Bolivia early in the seventeenth century. In the vast region of the Rio de la Plata, the eminent Franciscan missionaries St. Francis Solano and Luis de Bolaños laboured at Tucumán and in Paraguay, respectively, in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, although their order did not become a major factor in the evangelisation of the area at that time.

Farther inland, Franciscans reached Paraguay in 1537, very shortly after *conquistadores* entered that part of South America. Before proceeding further in our discussion of that colony, it should be underscored that during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries Paraguay comprised considerably more territory than does the diminutive country of that name which gained its independence from Spain in 1811. Royally appointed governors headed the administration of the colony beginning in the sixteenth century. Beyond its borders as established at that time, Paraguay long embraced much of what are now Argentina and Uruguay as well as south-western Brazil. Very early on members of the Mercedarian, Hieronymite, and Dominican orders followed the Franciscans in gaining footholds in this expansive region, as did secular interests. Under the command of Gonzalo de Mendoza, a party of *conquistadores* sailed up the Rio de la Plata and in 1537 established a fort called Asunción which soon evolved into a town and became the capital of Paraguay. Here the Spanish also first encountered the Guaraní, the large and generally nomadic tribe with which they would interact intimately and exploitatively for the next few centuries. Curiously enough, by a bull of Pope Paul II in 1547, the church at remote

Asunción, then a lengthy journey by canoe or other river transport from Buenos Aires or elsewhere near the mouth of the Rio de la Plata on the Atlantic, was the first in all of South America to be erected as a cathedral. Not until 1556, however, did Pedro Fernández de la Torre, a Spanish Franciscan, occupy that see as its first resident bishop. In Paraguay, as elsewhere, the propagation of the Gospel often went hand-in-hand with the expansion of European hegemony.

The Jesuits were necessarily relative latecomers in the general missionary enterprise in the Americas, as their order did not come into existence until more than a generation after the Franciscans had reached the New World. The Society of Jesus received a royal decree allowing them to pursue missionary work amongst the indigenous tribes of Mexico in 1572, but this did not actually begin until seventeen years later with the establishment of the San Luis de la Paz mission. Expansion came fairly quickly in that colony during the early years of the seventeenth century, however, eventually covering nearly one-half of it and extending as far north as what is now southern Arizona and Baja California.

In the meantime, the first Jesuits to work in South America reached Peru in 1568. From there they expanded their labours throughout much of Spanish South America during the next few decades. Before the end of the sixteenth century the Jesuits were active in Ecuador, Bolivia, Chile, and Colombia. From the last-named country they entered Venezuela and French Guiana, and from Chile Jesuit missionaries penetrated Argentina in the middle of the seventeenth century, eventually extending their outreach through Uruguay and Patagonia down to the Strait of Magellan. Meanwhile, they became active in Paraguay in the 1590s. One of their first activities there was to establish a college at Asunción. Shortly after the beginning of the seventeenth century Jesuits expanded the scope of their labours in Paraguay to missions to the Guaraní, as we shall see shortly.

The international composition of the Jesuit missionary corps should be emphasised. By the seventeenth century the Society of Jesus was represented in many European lands, and from several of those countries it drew men to propagate the Gospel in Spanish possessions in the New World. Strictly speaking, this violated the xenophobic official policy of Spain, according to which foreigners were generally denied entry to the realm, including its colonies. As Theodore Edward Treutlein noted, however, by the latter half of the seventeenth century scores of Jesuits of

French, Flemish, Irish, German, Czech, Hungarian, Italian, Polish, and other nationalities had nevertheless penetrated many of these colonies, along with colleagues from Spain.² This polyglot aspect is particularly relevant to the present study, because in the film *The Mission* the Jesuit missionaries bear names which suggest at least three or four nationalities, although the ethnic origin of the principal one, Father Gabriel, is ambiguous. In Robert Bolt's novel of the same name, however, he is identified in great detail as an Irishman.

Before turning to the central topic of Jesuit missions to the Guaraní, it is necessary to consider the planting of missions in those parts of Latin America which were under the hegemony of Portugal. Early Roman Catholic missionary undertakings in Portuguese South America can be summarised much more briefly than those in the Spanish colonies. Again, the first missionaries in Brazil were Franciscans, who began their work there in 1500. They enjoyed mixed results but by the middle of the sixteenth century were established in various parts of the colony. At that time counterparts from the young Society of Jesus arrived. They, too, spread at a moderate pace and certainly in much smaller numbers than in the Spanish possessions, although the Jesuits eventually became the predominant order in Brazil. Members of other orders, especially the Carmelites, Capuchins, and Mercedarians followed, some of them as early as the 1580s. As in the Spanish colonies of South America, the Jesuits proved to be the most influential in Brazil with the Franciscans in second place. Furthermore, the hindrances which priests and brothers of these orders encountered in Brazil were similar to those in the Spanish colonies, such as the difficulty of mastering a welter of indigenous languages, the hostility of some tribes, tropical diseases, virtually impenetrable terrain in many areas, the unwillingness of many indigenes to abandon polygyny, raids of slave traders on converts, and the opposition of some Spanish and Portuguese colonists and their descendants to the evangelisation and economic elevation of peoples whom they were trying to subjugate and exploit.

Having described the overall historical founding of missionary work in broad terms, we must examine the forms which it took. Missionaries in Latin America propagated the Gospel to the indigenous peoples of the Spanish and Portuguese colonies chiefly through the establishment and maintenance of missions. This may seem self-evident, but indeed it is not a necessary conclusion. It would have been

possible for Franciscans, Jesuits, and others to proclaim the Gospel through itinerant evangelism, as they in fact did on occasion, both in that part of the world and elsewhere. But this was not their mode of choice in Latin America. Instead, the *encomienda-doctrina* system, described later in the present chapter, developed early in the sixteenth century as a means of social control, exploitation of indigenous labour, and evangelisation. The *encomienda-doctrina* system was not destined to enjoy eternal life. In 1573 Philip II of Spain decreed that it was not to be extended beyond the areas in which it already existed.

In lieu of this system developed that of the mission. The goals of the latter were not new; like those of the *encomienda-doctrina* scheme they included the evangelisation of indigenous peoples previously unexposed to Christianity and the imparting to them of a selective version of European civilisation. The people to be converted were still held in a state of virtually involuntary isolation from both their own culture and, in some cases, that of Spanish and Portuguese colonists generally, as many missionaries deemed the latter no less detrimental to the inculcation of Christian beliefs and values as traditional native American cultures. The venues which sprang up to serve these ends were not initially called *missiones*, although that term soon gained currency in both popular and legal parlance. Most were under the administration of Franciscan and Jesuit missionaries, although their counterparts in the Capuchin, Dominican, and other orders also used these means.

From the outset there was an interplay of church and state in the creation of missions. To the Spanish and Portuguese monarchs, the willingness of dedicated religious personnel to live on the peripheries of their empires and exert a Europeanising influence on the potentially rebellious inhabitants of them seemed a godsend. These kings responded accordingly by investing large sums of sorely needed capital into the establishment of the missions and the salaries of the men who laboured at them. Inescapably, this implied some measure of control over the endeavours, such as the locations in which the missions would be created. At times the orders in question sought to free themselves from what they perceived as gratuitous meddling by establishing independent endowments to which individuals could contribute funds in support of specific missionary endeavours. On the other hand, it was not uncommon for missionaries to use the governments' political interests to their own advantage - and *vice versa*; they filled their periodic reports with accounts of real

and imagined threats from enemies on the borders of the colonies in which they worked. Jesuits in Paraguay, for example, emphasised the danger of raiders from Brazil undermining the stability of Spanish interests in central South America.³

Many missions soon took on the character of small or medium-sized towns in which as many as several thousand previously nomadic or semi-nomadic peoples became sedentary and were integrated into a structured economic life hitherto unknown to them. The self-contained communities often owned farms or ranches of considerable dimensions with thousands of head of cattle and other livestock and large fields of cultivated crops. Missions typically had a variety of workshops and other buildings in which leather was tanned, food processed, wine fermented, iron goods produced, textiles spun and made into clothing, and, in some cases, books and other materials printed. Many, though far from all, of the missions also included conventional schools for teaching literacy and other subjects. Lay members of the religious orders, often supplemented by former soldiers of Spanish and Portuguese colonial armies, taught manual trades to the indigenous occupants of the missions. Priests normally supervised a broad range of these activities while also leading the spiritual lives of their flocks. In many instances two ordained men shared these responsibilities and the oversight of all the inhabitants under their care. The question of communal ownership and the role of capitalist business techniques at the missions is a matter about which there is no consensus in the professional literature. It is beyond dispute, however, that not all that was produced was consumed locally; there was an active export market which raised liquid capital for the procurement of goods which could not be grown or manufactured by the residents.

The priests who oversaw the missions normally wielded ultimate worldly authority at them. At many of these communities, however, they of necessity shared power with locally elected councils and office-holders, giving them the political structure of Spanish or Portuguese villages, complete with civil and military officials. There were also courts and gaols for the incarceration of criminal offenders. The amount of authority which the indigenous peoples exercised reportedly varied greatly, and it would be misleading to suggest that the missions of Latin America were experiments in proto-democracy. It should be kept in mind that colonial authorities kept soldiers stationed at or near many of the missions to ensure imperial authority. Nevertheless, local governance may have imparted a sense of responsibility which

arguably provided one root of the democratic movements which made their mark on the history of the region in the nineteenth-century.

Spanish Settlers and the Guaraní

The indigenous people with whom the Jesuits interacted most in Paraguay were the Guaraní. This ethnic designation is an inclusive one which encompasses many tribes and dialects of central South America. Generally speaking, however, those indigenes who are subsumed under this rubric were speakers of a Tupian language who, until a few centuries before the arrival of Iberian peoples in South America, inhabited what is now north-eastern Paraguay and the adjacent areas of Brazil and Argentina. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries some migrated inland to the area of the Rio de la Plata. It was their descendants with whom Spanish *conquistadores* came into contact early in the sixteenth century.

The Guaraní are regarded as having been in many respects fairly typical of the tropical aboriginal ethnic groups of South America. They were semi-nomadic, practising primitive slash-and-burn agriculture which compelled them to move their settlements, which consisted of clusters of thatched houses, every few years. While the women tended fields of manioc, sweet potatoes, maize, and other crops, the men hunted and fished. Although writers of popular literature have often described the Guaraní as peaceful indigenes, in anthropological treatises they are not. The Guaraní frequently engaged in warfare; enemies who were unfortunate enough to fall into their hands risked being sacrificed and eaten. There is no consensus about the number of people in the ethnic group before the arrival of Spanish settlers in and near their tribal areas. Estimates range from a few hundred thousand to well over one million. What is certain, however, is that the decline of the Guaraní as a separate ethnic entity began very soon after Spanish colonists began to interact with them. In some of the Spanish territories of Latin America the settlers included considerable numbers of women from an early date. This was not the case in remote Asunción and environs, where a severe gender imbalance existed. For sexual gratification, therefore, Spanish males turned to Guaraní women as early as the 1530s, gathering entire harems of them and not infrequently entering into solemnised

marriages with them. These official and unofficial unions created the miscegenated race, or *mestizos*, from whom much of the rural population of present-day Paraguay is descended.

Not that all the contacts between the colonists and the native population were of a romantic sort. In various forms, involuntary servitude characterised economic interaction almost from the outset in Paraguay, as indeed they did in most other parts of Spanish America. An understanding of these exploitative institutions is essential if one is to grasp central themes of both the written and cinematographic literature pertaining to Jesuit missions to the Guaraní.

Slavery was not unknown in the Central and South America before the arrival of Europeans; the Spanish *conquistador* Hernando Cortés, for instance, described it amongst the Aztecs. There is no evidence, however, that it was particularly widespread amongst pre-colonial civilisations. Early on Spanish explorers captured and shipped back to Spain relatively small numbers of indigenes for sale or as gifts to sponsoring monarchs. Usually, though, it was not outright slavery, but the *repartimiento* and *encomienda* systems, in which native peoples of what was becoming Latin America were compelled to toil. We shall briefly consider both of these schemes.

To a limited extent black African slaves were imported into Spanish America, especially after efforts to keep indigenous peoples of that area in a state of servitude. Many of the latter rebelled, fled, or succumbed to diseases that colonists had brought from Europe. Curiously enough, Bartolomé de Las Casas, who was the bishop of Chiapas early in the sixteenth century and is often revered in Catholic history as a highly benevolent person because of his humane attitude towards the native people in his see, thought it defensible to rob Peter in order to pay Paul in this regard. Appalled by the mistreatment of indigenous labourers, he requested the Spanish monarch, Charles I, to allow each settler in Spain's American colonies to import a certain number of supposedly more hardy slaves from Africa. This proposal was accepted in 1517, although the colonists who participated in the scheme were required to pay a fee to the royal treasury. The importation of Africans to Portugal's primary colony, Brazil, had a generally similar genesis.

Repartimiento is a euphemistic derivative of the Spanish verb *repartir* meaning "to distribute". The system which it poorly describes was in operation beginning

in 1499, a mere seven years after Columbus ostensibly “discovered” the Americas in the name of the Spanish Crown - a development whose rapidity itself testifies to the willingness of imperialists to exploit humanity. According to the early terms of this system, approximately 5 per cent of the indigenes in a given district could be coerced into working in mines and another 10 per cent impressed for seasonal agricultural labour. Colonists who wished to avail themselves of native workers had to apply to the viceroy of their colony or, in some cases, to other officials, and declare that such usage on plantations and ranches, or in mines, was in fact necessary and would contribute to the production of essential food or other goods. In theory, at least, conditions of employment were relatively lenient. Agricultural workers served only two-week stints three or four times annually, while their less fortunate counterparts who toiled in mines were compelled to perform a similar number of periods of work, each of which lasted five weeks. Wages were to be paid.

Owing to endless complaints from missionaries and other personnel about mistreatment of indigenous labourers under this system, the Spanish government modified its terms in 1601 and 1609. Under the new form of *repartimiento*, fully 25 per cent of the natives in any given district could be required to work for the Spanish colonists, but in theory the former were free to choose their employers and the length of time they would serve. This form of largely involuntary servitude remained in force in Spanish-America until those colonies gained their independence during the first quarter of the nineteenth century and their constitutions forbade it. In practice the virtual impressment of impoverished indigenous peoples continued in much of South and Central America until the twentieth century.

What partly replaced the *repartimiento* system, although that scheme continued to co-exist alongside this new development, was the *encomienda-doctrina* programme in 1503. It was this, especially its abuses, against which the Jesuits protested repeatedly for decades. In brief, under its terms the Spanish Crown entrusted (*encomendar*) a certain number of indigenes to settlers as rewards for their services. Such an individual, an *encomendero* in Spanish, was permitted to demand tribute and labour from these people for certain lengths of time. As in the case of the *repartimiento* scheme, certain restrictions existed, if in many cases more in theory than in practice. These included *inter alia* demands that wages be paid, protection

given, and instruction imparted in the Christian religion. The last-named condition lay in the lands of the *doctrinero*, or teacher, who in most cases was a missionary of the Augustinian, Dominican, Franciscan, or Mercederian order. They were usually appointed by colonial viceroys. Only to a small degree did the Society of Jesus participate in this scheme. The missionaries in question conducted their work at *doctrinas*, which were villages created officially for the propagation of Christianity in stable environments but which in fact served as stationary supplies of cheap labour for the *encomenderos*. These communities typically included chapels, residences for the priests, schools, and small hospitals. In the schools the *doctrineros* did not attempt to make entire tribes literate but imparted the rudiments of Western education, including the Spanish language, to the sons of chiefs and other prominent people. Eventually some of these pupils became teachers. Those indigenes who converted to Christianity were compelled to participate in religious instruction. They were taught how to make the sign of the cross as well as recite set prayers, and they were given catechetical instruction in the basic doctrines of Roman Catholicism. Music and visual arts supplemented the curriculum. Many *doctrinas* were economically functional in their own right, with *obrajes*, or workshops, in which residents manufactured textiles, pots, and other products. Taxation came early to the *doctrinas*; inhabitants were required to pay annual poll taxes. To some extent these communities were quasi-isolated units, as Europeans were not permitted to remain for more than three days. Eventually many of the *doctrinas*, of which more than 9 000 had been established before the end of the sixteenth century, evolved into parishes comprising indigenous parishioners, usually with European priests. As we shall see, the *doctrinas* were obviously forerunners of the Jesuit *reducciones*, although the latter tended to be somewhat larger and economically more self-sufficient.

Abuses plagued this supposedly more enlightened policy virtually from its origin, chiefly in the form of mistreatment of the natives who were compelled to participate in it. Opponents consequently attempted repeatedly in the 1520s, 1530s, and 1540s to abolish the *encomienda* system, but they foundered on the rocks of resistance by colonial economic interests. Nevertheless, the scheme gradually weakened. *Encomiendas* became less profitable after ca 1600 when they were more heavily taxed. Furthermore, after 1701 those held *in absentia* came under governmental administration, as did those of deceased soldiers after 1718. Finally, the Spanish

Crown began to reserve for itself the right to grant *encomiendas*, which previously certain colonial officials had enjoyed. The system officially disappeared by the end of the eighteenth century.

In Paraguay the earliest noteworthy instance of opposition to involuntary servitude came not from the Jesuits but from a colonial official. King Charles V of Spain appointed Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca as governor of Paraguay. The appointee arrived in Asunción in 1542 and almost immediately antagonised some of the Spanish settlers there. Among other moves which disaffected them, he threatened to liberate their slaves, who by that time comprised a valuable part of the colonists' property. Some of the settlers circulated accusations against Alvar Nuñez, incarcerated him locally, and shipped him back to Spain. The discredited governor was soon released and eventually acquitted in that country, partly due to a lack of evidence because his accusers were either dead or in distant South America. His successors in Asunción did not emulate his moderately enlightened policies with regard to the Guaraní, many of whom remained enslaved and virtually without European spokesmen or protectors until the Jesuits began to take their side early in the seventeenth century.

The *Reducciones*

Although the term *reducciones* is firmly linked with the Society of Jesus in the historiography of Roman Catholic missions, these model villages in which converts and prospective converts to Christianity were gathered were not a Jesuit invention. Their origin can be traced to a Franciscan missionary, Luis de Bonanos, who well before the end of the sixteenth century, *i.e.* approximately a generation before the Jesuits entered the field in any significant way, founded eighteen such communities. He also helped to prepare the ground for subsequent missionaries in the region by writing the first Guaraní grammar and prayer book.⁴

By 1610, however, Jesuit counterparts were making their initial ventures in this dimension of missionary endeavours. In that year Marcial de Lorenzana collected Guaraní families approximately fifty kilometres north of the Paraná River, east of the confluence of it and the Paraguay River, and settled them as the village

of San Ignacio, appropriately named after the founder of the Society of Jesus. Later that year two Italian colleagues established another village, Nuestra Señora de Loreto.⁵ From the outset these communities were officially sanctioned by the Society. Indeed, it was a directive from the Jesuit general, Claudio Aquaviva, who headed the Society of Jesus from 1581 until 1615, that allowed them to be formally established as part of the order's missionary policy. The reason for their creation was neither economic nor social, but a response to the problem of evangelising and ministering to highly nomadic peoples. The mobility of the Guaraní and other indigenes in Latin America had caused the Franciscans and the Jesuits headaches for decades, and many voiced the opinion that gathering them into geographically stable units was the only feasible means of pursuing effective missionary work amongst them. Only later did it become apparent that such communities could serve as a means of defending the indigenous peoples from raids by slave traders in both the Spanish and the Portuguese colonies.

The *reducciones* proliferated quite rapidly during the next twenty years as the number of Jesuits active in Paraguay rose and prospective converts often took the initiative in approaching them and their successful communities. Many *reducciones* sprang up along the Paraguay, Uruguay, and Paraná rivers, while others developed some distance from those principal waterways. By the late 1620s there were eleven. This initial growth spurt, however, ended disastrously when violent raids prompted a consequential development that signalled a new era in the history of the *reducciones*.

Slave traders from São Paulo, the infamous *Paulistas*, at that time expanded their raids into the heartland of the Guaraní homeland, which had begun as early as 1611, capturing and dragging off into Portuguese territory large numbers of people. They showed no respect for the religious character of the virtually defenceless *reducciones* and pillaged nine of them by the end of the 1620s. Under the leadership of the dynamic Father Antonio Ruíz de Montoya, one of the principal figures in early Jesuit missions amongst the Guaraní, the small remnant of survivors trekked and travelled by canoe farther away from the border of the Portuguese territory. They re-established themselves in new *reducciones* which, however, the *Paulistas* continued to raid for many years. In response to this aggression, the perplexed Montoya sailed to Spain in 1637 and gained from the Spanish monarch, Philip IV, who at that time also ruled Portugal, permission to create a Guaraní militia. In fact,

this royal decree merely sanctioned *de facto* arming of the Guaraní which had been going on for well over a decade, although it allowed the militia to operate more openly and, among other things, replace their bamboo firearms with much more durable ones of iron. As Spain was then well into its period of decline as a world military power, the availability of large numbers of indigenous colonial soldiers at a very low cost to the Crown was welcomed. To induce Guaraní men to join the militia, such incentives as exemptions from taxes were granted. Lacking adequate European troops to protect Spanish America from incursions by various other countries in the ongoing jockeying for colonial power in that mercantile age, Spain frequently used elements of this indigenous militia for well over a century. It was never merely for the purpose of protecting the *reducciones* and their inhabitants from slave traders.⁶ In any case, the defence force was far from perfect in performing that latter task. The raids continued almost unabated, and in 1652 one Jesuit estimated that to date more than 300 000 Guaraní had fallen victim to them. Nine years later Philip V of Spain ordered the *reducciones* to give up firearms, although this decree was later revoked as inadvisable because in the absence of such weapons the incursions of the slave traders mounted.⁷ The militia, which encompassed units at most of the *reducciones*, thus continued as a viable military force.

Eventually the military proved to be at best a mixed blessing from a missiolog-ical viewpoint. As one historian of the Society of Jesus has remarked, the Jesuits long sought in vain “to dispel rumours that their military strength was a sign of imperial ambition, that armed ‘savages’ might cut loose and massacre the colonists, that the main purpose of Jesuit armouries was not to protect Indians but to guard fabulous hoards of treasure”. All these accusations, commonly made by Spanish settlers and their descendants, were false and ironic. “The fact was that by the 1740s Jesuit Provincials were protesting at the burden of military commitments as Portuguese raids became more frequent. So many Fathers were occupied with full-time organization [of the army] that plans to open more reductions in the Chaco had to be postponed”, the same historian has argued. “The Indians themselves were beginning to grumble at long campaigns which kept them away from their families for months. Tax exemptions did not compensate for the disruption of industrial and religious routine, and when conscription for all able-bodied men was introduced

the fears and rumours grew, sharpened by xenophobic resentment of non-Spanish Jesuits".⁸

That the *reducciones* generally thrived as religious, social, and economic communities is rarely disputed. In fact, even strident enemies of the Jesuit undertaking not only conceded that they were prosperous entities but accused them of accumulating inordinate wealth, although that charge was often linked to similarly unproven claims that the Jesuits were operating clandestine silver mines at some of them and sending the proceeds to their Order without paying taxes. In fact, the economy of the *reducciones* was agriculturally based. The best-known crop they produced was *yerba-maté*, popularly known as Paraguayan tea, which was exported in large quantities to other parts of Latin America and to Europe. Other crops included rice, maize, tobacco, and various fruits and vegetables. Some of the *reducciones* also kept substantial herds of cattle on the vast areas of grass surrounding them. This aspect of animal husbandry not only supplied ample quantities of meat but also provided hundreds of thousands of hides for export to Spain through the years.

The system of land tenure was less simple than some tendentious writers have described it in their efforts either to castigate the Jesuits as exploiters of the indigenous inhabitants or present the *reducciones* as an idyllic early experiment in rural socialism. In fact, the land was typically divided into three parts, namely communal land, on which residents laboured a few days a week, private family plots, and ecclesiastical land, much of which was worked by teenagers. The produce of the private parcels was generally consumed locally by the people who owned them. That which was harvested or otherwise produced on the communal land, however, was collectively owned but administered by the generally two Jesuits at each *reducción*, who were responsible for disposing of that which was exported. In that case, it became a matter of business indistinguishable from the procedures by which secular undertakings disposed of their goods. Revenue from sales was used for the purchase of a broad variety of items that could not be produced locally.

Life in these communities in the wilderness appears to have been generally harmonious and fulfilling to most of their inhabitants. From an early date the Jesuits intentionally sought to isolate the Guaraní from the Spanish settlements in the interest of protecting the former from moral corruption and involuntary servitude of the

encomienda system. This policy was misunderstood for many decades. Most of the *reducciones* provided simple accommodation for the few thousand people who resided at them, generally in monogamous families who inhabited small apartments linked to each other in long buildings. There was invariably a chapel, and many had schools and workshops. Collective religious life always occupied a central place in the routine of the *reducciones*. Mass was celebrated daily in Latin, and according to many accounts the Guaraní who toiled in the fields left the chapel to attend to their chores singing hymns. The Jesuits tended to place great emphasis on music, and they found that it nurtured the spiritual life of their charges to arrange frequent processions and festivals. The Roman Catholic liturgical tradition, in other words, was partly indigenised, apparently with considerable effect. On the other hand, the creation of autonomous churches, a goal of Christian foreign missionary work generally, lagged far behind. During a century and a half of existence, not a single ordained Guaraní served at any of the *reducciones*. The European Jesuits held firmly and jealously the reins of spiritual control.

The place of music at the *reducciones* deserves special mention for several reasons. It was a remarkable cultural achievement on which many historians have commented, one which involved the successful transplanting of European, especially Baroque, traditions to the indigenous peoples of the Rio de la Plata. There it quickly came to occupy a central place in both the aesthetic and liturgical life of the *reducciones*. Thirdly, the musical achievements of the Guaraní under Jesuit auspices are featured in *The Mission*, both as a means of uniting the missionaries with the people whom they lead spiritually and as a symbol of the success of the missions which papal emissary Altamirano finds particularly appealing.

As the Jesuit musicologist and historian T. Frank Kennedy has observed, almost from the outset singing was used as a means of imparting Christian doctrine to the Guaraní, and as early as 1628 Guaraní musicians were appearing in Buenos Aires to perform at the Feast of the Blessed Sacrament. Their achievement is less surprising, though no less impressive, in light of the fact that talented European music teachers had lived amongst them almost from the start of the *reducciones*, and eventually most of these communities had orchestras. At one, Yapeyú, there was by the 1690s a conservatory under the leadership of an Austrian Jesuit, Antonius Sepp, who had studied at the Imperial Court in Vienna. In addition to producing

countless talented players of instruments as well as vocalists, many of the *reducciones* had workshops in which residents manufactured violins and other instruments.⁹

The fact that apparently little or no effort was made at the *reducciones* to compose music based directly on Guaraní culture ruffles the feathers of twentieth-century missiological sensitivities, but Kennedy makes no apologies for this apparent lack of indigenisation. Arguing that “music, more easily than other arts, can cross the cultural lines that separate people and can instead create understanding”, he insists that the importation of Italian Baroque traditions was not a case of cultural imperialism and that the Jesuits in question did not keep their charges *in statu pupillari* but instead elevated them to the state of highly skilled musicians whose proficiency gained international recognition.

The Gradual Suppression of the Society of Jesus

The Jesuit undertaking in Paraguay reached its conclusion in the 1760s when the Spanish government of King Carlos III ordered members of the Society of Jesus to leave all his domains. This drastic move was an important phase in the suppression of the order on an almost global basis, which reached its culmination in 1773. With regard to central South America, however, it was another in a series of conflicts with ecclesiastical and colonial authorities which had repeatedly jeopardised, and sometimes temporarily halted, the work of the Jesuit missionaries there.

Indeed, as early as 1633 they came into conflict with the governor of Paraguay. Don Luis de Cespedes demanded personal service from the Guaraní at the *reducciones*, a command which violated both a royal decree by Philip IV and a papal bull prohibiting involuntary servitude. Simultaneously, the bishop of Asunción attempted to compel the *reducciones* to pay tithes, although this, too, was forbidden by a papal bull. Bitter confrontations between representatives of the Society of Jesus and these two men in the capital of Paraguay came to a halt, however, when the former produced documents proving that their superiors, and those of their secular adversaries, in Rome and Madrid, respectively, supported their position, which essentially assured their partial autonomy from local authority.

A much louder controversy took place during the following decade when representatives of the Society of Jesus again crossed verbal swords with both worldly and episcopal powers. Their principal adversary of note this time was the quixotic bishop of Asunción, Bernardino de Cárdenas (1579-1668). Born in what is now Bolivia, he was educated in a Jesuit school in Lima but subsequently entered the Franciscan Order in that city. The multilingual Cárdenas became a missionary to indigenous tribes near La Paz. Nominated by King Philip IV, he was appointed bishop of Asunción in 1640. From the outset his enemies in Paraguay, including the temporary governor of that colony, contested his title and vowed not to respect him. Initially he enjoyed cordial relations with the Jesuits in his diocese, but the relationship soon soured in the power struggle in Asunción. In a sermon preached in 1644, Cárdenas levelled charges at the Society of Jesus which, *mutatis mutandis*, resounded in Paraguay for another century and eventually were heard in Spain and elsewhere in Europe, as well. The bishop asserted that the Jesuits prevented the Guaraní from paying taxes, withheld tithes from their bishops, had mines which yielded an untaxed fortune for their order's general fund in Rome, failed to respect the secrecy of the confessional, and intended to establish a separate empire within Paraguay. Furthermore, Cárdenas claimed that he and his fellow bishops had received royal permission to expel the Jesuits from his diocese but that his colleagues were too cowardly to execute this. His charges were never proven, but the Jesuits were temporarily compelled to leave Asunción. Violence ensued. The Jesuit college in Asunción was destroyed, and Cárdenas was nearly killed when a Guaraní fired a shot at him in the cathedral during one of the clashes. His pectoral cross stopped the bullet from entering his chest. He was eventually driven out of his bishopric in 1651. By then his Jesuit foes had returned to Asunción and continued their mission relatively unhindered, although his name has always been looked upon with disfavour in the Society of Jesus, which never fully succeeded in obliterating the suspicion which his unsubstantiated accusations against it had engendered on both sides of the Atlantic. His armed struggle, and that of his Guaraní guerillas, was thus for nothing. For that matter, so were the protracted negotiations in which the Society of Jesus engaged to save the seven *reducciones*, which the missionaries in question had to abandon anyway when the Order was expelled from Spain and Spanish America in 1767.

While this resistance movement was in progress, the Society of Jesus was coming under increasing criticism and political pressure in Europe, including those dimensions of the international verbal assault which we discussed above. In some of the royal courts, moreover, the ultimately consequential campaign was mounting during this period. One centre of this was Paris, where intrigue and adulterous scandals plagued the courts of Louis XV and Louis XVI for decades. A principal opponent of the Jesuits during this period was Étienne François de Choiseul. Born in Lorraine in 1719, he became ambassador in Rome in 1754 and remained there for approximately three years. It has been deduced, but never conclusively proven, that Choiseul decided during these years in the Eternal City to abolish the Society of Jesus. In any case, he served as French ambassador in Vienna as well as foreign minister and minister of war during the late 1750s and the 1760s. A friend of Voltaire, he became highly interested in the religio-cultural strife that burdened French society during at that time. Choiseul collaborated with his counterpart in Portugal to propagate slanderous rumours about the Jesuits. Ultimately, his campaign brought about their expulsion from France.

In this rhetorical warfare Madame de Pompadour (1721-1764) also played a role. The acknowledged mistress of Louis XV, she wielded great power at Versailles and served as a protector of Choiseul. Madame de Pompadour also patronised liberally the fine arts and contributed notably to the maintenance of the Encyclopædists, thereby forging personal alliances which invariably pitted her against the Jesuits. The extent to which she contributed to their downfall in France is probably impossible to ascertain, but in any case she stood at the hub of the intrigues which eventually spelt their doom.

In one of history's ironies, the most effective political attack on the Society of Jesus came not from Paris, then the widely acknowledged centre of Enlightenment secularism, but from Lisbon in relatively backward Portugal. Much of the assault was led by one dynamic and ambitious man. Unquestionably one of the darkest characters in the gallery of villains which Jesuit historiography chronically exhibits is Sebastião José de Carvalho e Mello, more commonly known as Pombal. It was arguably he, more than any other single figure, who brought about the expulsion of the Jesuits from both the Iberian Peninsula and the Portuguese and Spanish colonies of the New World. Born near Coimbra, Portugal, in 1699, he was educated as a

cavalry officer and lawyer. Pombal served as the Portuguese ambassador in London from 1739 until 1744 and in a corresponding capacity in Vienna during the latter half of the 1740s. This foreign exposure during the age of the Enlightenment brought into focus the relative cultural lag of his native land and the continuing power of the Roman Catholic establishment in it, two attributes which he thought were intimately linked. His opportunity to promote the advancement of Portugal, as he interpreted its historical position, came at mid-century when Joseph I succeeded John V as king. The new monarch, whom historians agree was an unenergetic soul, named Pombal first minister of foreign affairs and war but subsequently promoted him to the prime ministership. In these capacities Pombal wielded enormous power during that absolutist age, freely issuing decrees (most of which were countersigned by Joseph I) to impose his will on public matters throughout Portuguese society and, simultaneously, line his own pockets.¹⁰

Four historical events gave Pombal pretexts to proceed in his campaign against the Society of Jesus and the Roman Catholic Church generally. First came the resistance of some of the Guaraní with partial Jesuit assistance to the transfer of the seven previously mentioned *reducciones* from Spanish to Portuguese hegemony in South America. Then it was discovered that Jesuits had supplied unfavourable reports about various Brazilian colonial officials at the request of the Queen Mother. This was seen by many as improper ecclesiastical meddling in the affairs of state during a time when the "two kingdoms" doctrine of the separation of church and state was not respected in Portugal or many other countries. Thirdly, the Italian Jesuit Gabriele Malagrida, who had been a missionary in Brazil but lived in Lisbon, preached and wrote that the devastating earthquake and tidal waves that destroyed much of that city in 1755 were punishments that a wrathful God was inflicting on an atheistic and tyrannical king and his corrupt government. Finally, in 1758, there was an attempt to assassinate Joseph I. Malagrida and a dozen other prominent Jesuits were accused of complicity in the plot.

With much public opinion to support him, Pombal proceeded gradually but firmly against the Society of Jesus during the latter half of the 1750s. In 1757 he banished the Jesuits from the royal court in Lisbon. The following year Pombal pressured Pope Benedict into sending Cardinal Francisco Saldanha to Brazil, where he ostensibly discovered that the Jesuit undertaking was part of an intercontinental

commercial network. In 1759 Joseph I ordered the expulsion of the Society of Jesus from Portugal and its colonies. In the wake of this move, Pombal commanded the papal nuncio to leave Lisbon and severed diplomatic ties with the Vatican. Two years later the more than twenty erstwhile Jesuit schools in Portugal were secularised and Malagrida was publicly strangled by garrote and his body burnt. To justify these actions, Pombal arranged for the publication of large collections of documents allegedly proving Jesuit usurpation of power and other misdeeds. Under his own name he published a highly tendentious, three-volume work titled *Chronological Deductions*, in which he traced the nefarious influence of the Jesuits on the history of Portugal. Both the Society of Jesus and, to some extent, the Vatican protested against these measures, but the ineffectiveness of their remonstrations merely underscored the relative weakness of these religious institutions against the power of a determined political enemy at that time. Pombal's own career continued to rise, at least temporarily, after he suppressed the Jesuits. In 1770 he was given the title Marquis of Pombal; hence, the name by which he is commonly known. During the following decade, however, Queen Maria I succeeded her father, and many of Pombal's deeds were reversed, including some relating to his campaign against the clergy. Among other things, sixty imprisoned Jesuits were given pardons. Pombal himself was less fortunate. Many victims of his legal machinations sued for damages, and he was accused of fraud and murder. A court declared him an infamous criminal in 1781, but Pombal, then in his eighties, was not incarcerated. He died in disgrace in 1782.

With regard to the suppression of the Jesuits, France followed suit in 1764. The Society of Jesus was declared illegal that year and not allowed to function. The decree applied to the French colonies, as well, although by that time France had lost most of its overseas territories in the Americas, most notably Canada. In contrast to its Portuguese counterpart, however, the French government did not force the Jesuits, who then numbered at least 3 500 within its borders, into exile.

More directly consequential for the *reducciones* was the fact that the government in neighbouring Spain, like many of its counterparts elsewhere in Europe, watched these developments closely and found reasons for celebrating the relative ease with which Pombal succeeded in suppressing the Society of Jesus. In Spain there was also a desire to modernise what was internationally regarded as a stagnant

and backward society whose golden age had ended more than a century earlier. There, too, the clergy, not least the Jesuits, were widely regarded as impediments to progress and a hindrance to royal absolutism.

Carlos III ascended the throne in Madrid in 1759, *i.e.* in the midst of the suppression of the Jesuits in Portugal. He soon proved to be what historians of his era call an “enlightened despot”, determined to help Spain belatedly rid herself of the medieval residue which continued to keep her socially and intellectually a relatively backward country at a time when some other lands, most notably France and England, were showing signs of embracing the Enlightenment without, however, leaving absolutism behind. Carlos did in fact succeed in improving the Spanish economy and transport system as well as the medieval public administration of the country in general, despite popular resistance to innovation. His attempts to subordinate the Roman Catholic Church more rigidly under his own thumb also proved successful. Carlos did not allow papal bulls to be published in Spain without his permission, thereby in effect placing the Vatican under a form of limited censorship. The Jesuits, in royal eyes a loose cannon on the deck of the ship of state, seemed especially threatening to his absolute rule and an impediment to his reforms. Riots which shook Madrid and other cities in 1766 provided a pretext for striking a fatal blow at their presence. Carlos and his prime minister, Count Campomanes, blamed the Society of Jesus for instigating this violence as part of a conspiracy to establish a sovereign state in Spain and the Spanish colonies in the Americas. With the rhetorical support of many of the country’s secular priests, he issued a royal decree dated 27 February 1767, though not promulgated until the end of March and the first few days of April, ordering the expulsion of the Jesuits from Spain and its colonies. During April of that year nearly 3 000 of them were literally herded to ports of embarkation and placed on ships that took them out of the country. Eventually more than 5 000 were deported from Spain and another 1 400 from the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, which the Spanish Bourbons also ruled. The Crown confiscated a large amount of Jesuit property. Indicative of the lack of solidarity in the clerical ranks and of the widespread resentment of the Jesuits, forty-six of the sixty bishops in Spain voted in favour of this drastic move, and Francisco Vasquez, the Superior-General of the Augustinian order, rejoiced that Spain had finally been purified of the Jesuit “vermin”.¹¹ As we shall see in Chapter

Five, the action in Fritz Hochwalder's drama, *Das heilige Experiment* (the English version of which bears the title *The Strong Are Lonely*) takes place entirely on 16 July 1767, *i.e.* some three months after the decree mandating the deportation of the Jesuits from Spain and its colonies had been issued. The matter was thus a *fait accompli*; the Jesuits in Spanish America had no alternative but to yield to the decree and pack their bags. In some instances Franciscans and Dominicans attempted to fill their shoes, but this proved virtually impossible. Missionary work inevitably deteriorated in Latin America following the withdraw of several thousand Jesuits. At that time members of the Society of Jesus ministered to an estimated 700 000 people in the Americas, compared to approximately 250 000 under Franciscan care. A total of about 700 000 Guaran had been baptised, most of them by Jesuits. The *reducciones* soon declined without the missionary guidance on which they had been kept dependent for a century and a half. Most ceased to exist within a few years, although some of the communities continued to exist as villages with their churches.

The general suppression of the Society of Jesus, strictly speaking, lies outside the parameters of this study, but in the interest of historical contextualisation we shall summarise it very briefly. Following the expulsion of the Jesuits from the Spanish domains, the court of Carlos III pressured the Vatican to terminate the Order completely. As indicated earlier, criticism of the Jesuits had mounted for decades in much of Europe, facilitating this task somewhat. Pope Clement III resisted pressure to suppress the Society of Jesus, but he died in 1769. The conclave which chose his successor was allegedly dominated by the question of the Jesuits' fate. Proponents of the Jesuits have long asserted that Cardinal Giovanni Ganganelli, who was elected Pope Clement XIV, promised to yield to pressure and put an end to the Jesuits, although this allegation has never been conclusively demonstrated. In any case, he deferred a decision on the matter until 1773, when he issued the brief *Dominus ac Redemptor* dissolving but not condemning the Society of Jesus. In brief, the pontiff argued that no religious order was guaranteed permanency and that one could be disbanded if it harmed the inner harmony of the church. Jesus Christ, he reminded readers, was the Prince of Peace, and peace He had bestowed to the earth. The preservation of ecclesiastical peace was one papal duty. Clement briefly related incidents of discord in which the Society of Jesus had been involved, judiciously remaining silent with regard to most of its accomplishments and the

sacrifices which many of its members had made for more than two centuries. In practice, the Society of Jesus continued to function on a small basis, either underground in countries like France, or openly and with governmental sanction, as, ironically enough, in Lutheran Prussia for several years. The Order was restored gradually during the politically chaotic first two decades of the nineteenth century. The downfall of Napoleon in 1814 and the conservative reaction which brought about the restoration of much of the pre-Napoleonic European political system gave Pope Pius VII an opportunity to revive the Jesuits, which he did in 1814. The apostolic constitution *Sollicitudo omnium ecclesiarum* revoked Clement XIV's suppression of the Society of Jesus. Initially the restored Order had only about 600 members, but it grew quite steadily for the next century and a half. Jesuits returned to Latin America as missionaries in relatively large numbers during the nineteenth and twentieth, but they did not rebuild the *reducciones* of Paraguay or other countries of that region.

A Witness to the Results of Closure

Undoubtedly, the perceptions of eighteenth-century observers of the *reducciones* interpreted the termination of the Jesuit presence variously. Accordingly, no claim of representativeness can be made for the observations of any single witness. We shall nevertheless cautiously quote those of a Spanish scientist and military man, Félix de Azara (1742-1808), who travelled to remote sites in Paraguay in 1781 and evidently asked many questions of people who still resided at sites of *reducciones* how they had functioned and what changes had occurred in social and economic life since the departure of the Jesuits well over a decade earlier.

It should be emphasised that de Azara did not have a particularly idealised impression of local conditions under Jesuit rule. He emphasised that real power was vested in the priests, or curates and sub-curates who "were masters of all" that occurred at the *reducciones*. Indigenous prerogative was limited and derived: "Although each town had its Indian *corregidor*, *alcaldes*, and *regidores*, who comprised a municipal council like that of a Spanish town, they had no jurisdiction, and were in effect nothing more than the executors of the orders of the curate, who

invariably handed down mild judgments in all cases, civil and criminal, but did not permit an appeal to other Spanish judges or *audiencias*". Furthermore, de Azara noted, these priestly potentates were an aloof lot who "never walked through the streets of the town or entered the house of any Indian" and who conducted their religious affairs with endless pomp while wearing costly garments which rivalled anything he had witnessed in Madrid and Toledo. He had heard that only a tiny percentage of the Guaraní had been taught to read and write, although "some were taught the trades of ironsmith and silversmith and painting, sculpture, music, dancing, and so forth", while many others had served in agricultural capacities. This traveller evidently held no brief for the collective system which characterised the economy of the *reducciones*. The virtual absence of private property, de Azara believed, had deprived the Guaraní "of any incentive to use reason or talent, since the most industrious, able, and worthy person had the same food, clothing, and pleasures as the most wicked, dull, and indolent". Spiritually, he doubted that great progress in the propagation of Christianity had been made. Notwithstanding the requirement that the residents be baptised and pray regularly, de Azara repeated uncritically reports he had heard that "there was little true religion among the Indians", although what detractors meant by this is not specified. This visitor thought it plausible, however, because few of the Jesuit missionaries could speak the Guaraní language well enough to proclaim the Gospel in it.¹²

For all the faults he believed had compromised the value of the *reducciones*, de Azara compared them favourably with what he found in Paraguay in 1781. He reported that the other clerics to whom the withdrawing Jesuits had handed their communities wielded only spiritual and not temporal power and that the latter had been entrusted to a secular administrator. Moreover, a military governor oversaw the missions along the Paraná and Uruguay rivers. Given his preference for personal accountability, de Azara believed that compared with their successors, the Jesuits had been "more able, moderate, and frugal" and had "regarded their towns as their own handiwork and private possession, and so loved them and worked for their good". By contrast, both the secular governors and the administrators who served under them "not only lacked the intelligence of the Jesuits but regarded the wealth of the community as a mine which was theirs to exploit for a short time". In

consequence, the communities in question had become impoverished while “the Indians are compelled to work harder and are more poorly fed and clothed”.¹³

Liberationist Interpretations

During the last quarter of the twentieth century, perhaps most notably in connection with the quincentennial of the initial voyage of Christopher Columbus to the Western Hemisphere in 1492, liberation theologians have occasionally reconsidered the *reducciones*. Their largely unsympathetic and generally predictable interpretations have not shed a great deal of new light on the history of these communities, but they are nevertheless relevant to the present study because we shall focus in part on the film *The Mission* which was produced when liberation theology was becoming relatively well known outside theological circles and because that film contains many liberationist elements, however poorly developed most of these are in it. We shall therefore briefly consider the principal perceptions of representative liberationist writers in this regard.

Indispensable to a consideration of this topic is the work of Enrique Dussel, who is sometimes regarded as the doyen of Latin American liberation church historians. Born in Argentina in 1934 and educated in *inter alia* Madrid, Mainz, and Paris, he was compelled by the oppressive political climate of his homeland to become an expatriate and eventually settled in Mexico. Dussel has written extensively about both liberation theology and church history. His *Historia de la Iglesia en América Latina* is particularly well known as a standard work on its subject. In 1992 he edited a quincentennial symposium titled *The Church in Latin America 1492-1992*.¹⁴

In his introductory essay in this work, Dussel strove to interpret the history of the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America in the context of its symbiotic relationship with the ruling imperial culture. According to this overarching interpretation, by the middle of the sixteenth century one could clearly see the lineaments of a system of political domination which “gave control of the church entirely over to the state, through a system of patronage under which the civil and political powers produced nominees for all church appointments, from the lowliest sacristan to the

grandest bishop". Within another two generations, *i. e.* by early in the seventeenth century, the ecclesiastical and socio-political structures had attained their apogee with large numbers of dioceses created, more than thirty institutions granting diplomas in theology, and other dimensions of the hierarchy rapidly unfolding. By 1620, when the dioceses of Mexico and Buenos Aires were created near the northern and southern extremes of the Spanish-American imperial world of the Western Hemisphere, "the organization of Spanish colonial Christendom was complete". Meanwhile, in a nascent movement which has never ended, large numbers of impoverished lay people allegedly resisted, often through armed rebellions, the establishment of this alliance of church and state dominated from above, foresaging the liberationist movements of the twentieth century.¹⁵

Dussel places the *reducciones* into the context of this proto-liberationist history. In his chronological framework, the period beginning with the coronation of Philip IV in 1621 marked a new era of continued expansion and consolidation of the still young and vibrant church in Latin America, one characterised by internal ecclesiastical and political disputes as well as by challenges to the church by ongoing political and economic expansion. Dussel views the origins of the *reducciones* in this context. "In Spanish America, it was the century of the 'reductions,' missionary settlements of Indians, extending from the Orinoco and the plains of Colombia in northern South America down to Paraguay, where the Jesuit reductions became prototypes of socialism in their way".¹⁶ Dussel did not in this essay adduce any evidence of this, however, or seek to explain the economic structure of the *reducciones* or broach the disputed question of whether the Jesuit control of them actually constituted a form of intended benevolent colonialism in its own right.

Those questions, and others related to them, were left to Margarita Durán Estragó, a Paraguayan Roman Catholic who has specialised in the ecclesiastical history of that country. In a sparsely documented article spanning several thousand words, she emphasised that far from being uniformly sheltered communities in the history of Latin American Christianity, many *reducciones*, especially those which antedated the Jesuit communities of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, were actually direct instruments of exploitation. To cite but one example on which Durán concentrates, during the 1570s the Viceroy of Peru, Francisco de Toledo, implemented a policy of assembling indigenes in *reducciones*, both for purposes of

evangelisation and in the hope of reversing the decline of the native population, which provided an inexpensive and, it was thought, inexhaustible supply of labour. One of Toledo's first such communities was in fact Santiago, later called Lima, the capital of Peru. Jesuits were given responsibility for the spiritual leadership of this *reducción*. In Durán's portrayal, life there bordered on slavery and was at least to some degree inhumane. She emphasises that the physical layout of Santiago was based on the plan created in the 1560s by the Peruvian colonial Juan de Matienzo and featured a central square on which was situated a church and missionary's residence. The community was popularly known as *El Cercado*, i.e. The Enclosed, because walls were constructed "in order to control the Indians and prevent them from escaping". Many nevertheless fled, particularly because they resisted compulsory labour in the mines and simply had no desire to live in regimented communities. Durán believes that the principal historical legacy of the short-lived Peruvian *reducciones* was their contribution to the destruction of the social and economic basis of the Inca regime. On what she bases this conclusion, however, she does not reveal.¹⁷

Durán's perception of the initial Paraguayan *reducciones* was similarly negative. She stressed that those amongst the Guaraní were created around 1580 for the purpose of pacifying and controlling these indigenes, who had begun to revolt against Spanish imperialists, by herding them into manageable settlements. At first the religious element at them was minimal; they lacked permanent residential missionaries, and their governance "was left mainly in the hands of settlers or overseers, and to a lesser extent to the chief caciques of the people".¹⁸

A new era in the history of the Paraguayan *reducciones* began shortly after the turn of the seventeenth century, however. Under the application of the Ordinances of Francisco de Alfaro, Judge of Charcas, in 1611, priests effectively replaced the exploitative *encomenderos* as the holders of the reins of power. With clerical supervision, the indigenes were to be protected from the abuses of the *encomenderos*. The missionaries concomitantly entered the political and economic arena to a significantly greater degree than hitherto had generally been the case. In Durán's words, "these laws increased the power and influence of the priests-in charge by entrusting them with not only the spiritual care of the Indians, but also the temporal administration of the good produced by the community and supervision of elections

to the Native Council". As part of this arrangement, residents of *reducciones* were exempted from service, or *encomienda*, for terms of ten years, and in effect Jesuits were often able to extend these exemptions indefinitely. This set their *reducciones* qualitatively apart from those of the Franciscans, whose residents generally remained subject to *encomienda*. The Franciscan *reducciones* co-operated significantly more closely with the economic basis of Spanish-American colonialism than did their more isolated Jesuit counterparts.¹⁹

Durán paid particular attention to the economic basis of the Jesuit *reducciones*, stressing its mixed character. Individual families were assigned plots of land based on the number of children in them, and they were allowed to retain the produce of these allotments. On the other hand, the communal sector was devoted to both agriculture and livestock farming, and the animals and crops produced on it supported the community in general, underwriting *inter alia* ecclesiastical life and the annual tribute to the Spanish Crown paid in lieu of *encomienda*. Another important dimension of the communal sector comprised the workshops, the products of which were often exported. Durán's perception of this mixed economy is generally positive.²⁰

Durán's overall assessment of the rôle of the *reducciones* in Spanish-American colonial history, however, is less laudatory. She concluded that although these communities protected many of the indigenes of greater Paraguay, "In short, Indian reductions or 'doctrines' were a lesser evil within the ruling oppressive colonial system".²¹

In 1986, in anticipation of the Columbian quincentennial, the Parisian theologian and journalist Michel Clévenot (b. 1932) levelled one of the most caustic volleys at the *reducciones* in recent times. It is also amongst the most derivative and apparently does not rest on any original research. In his brief historical account, Clévenot stressed the related themes of religio-cultural imperialism and paternalism. Wherever in greater Paraguay missionaries of the Society of Jesus went, he generalised emphatically, their intention was uniform: "*the Jesuits tried to impose another way of life on the Guarani*". These insensitive Europeans, Clévenot insisted categorically, treated their indigenous charges like immature school children in a thoroughly regimented daily routine which stifled maturation and initiative. Consequently, the atmosphere at the *reducciones* resembled that of "a monastery,

or a Jesuit college” in which frequent use of corporal punishment (but not the death penalty, which was not employed) was “also reminiscent of the world of childhood”. Ironically, an overarching goal of Jesuit missionary endeavour in Latin America was to transform the Guaraní into adults, but the practices implemented militated against the attainment of this aim. In harmony with the missionaries’ thoroughly condescending attitudes towards the Guaraní, the municipal councils of the *reducciones* were essentially shams, as “in fact the two Jesuit ‘parish priests’ ran everything, with the help of Indian assistants”. Clévenot was unwilling to concede that the Jesuits enjoyed more than severely limited success in fulfilling their ambitions, but he attributes to their endeavours the destruction of “the old tribal structure” with its chiefs and shamans as well as the traditional structure of the Guaraní family. What rôle secular forces of imperialism may have played in these transformations he did not attempt to determine. The Society of Jesus, in his view, apparently bore sole responsibility.²²

By and large, recent liberationist interpretations of the *reducciones* as historical phenomena are historiographically undistinguished when assayed with the touchstone of conventional scholarship. No less than the treatments of earlier eras, they are patently products of the spirit of their times. The insights which they provide offer little that is novel. Tendentiousness unnecessarily beclouds content and homogenises complex historical realities. The corrective value of these interpretations arguably lies in the insistence of their formulators to call attention to matters which were generally not given their due in previous studies of the *reducciones*.

Notes

1. One particularly relevant example of this is Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Las Casas: In Search of the Poor of Jesus Christ* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993).
2. Theodore Edward Treutlein, "Non-Spanish Jesuits in Spain's American Colonies", in *Greater America: Essays in Honor of Herbert Eugene Bolton* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1945), pp. 219-242.
3. Herbert E. Bolton, "The Mission as a Frontier Institution in the Spanish-American Colonies", *The American Historical Review*, XXIII, no. 1 (October 1917), pp. 42-61.
4. David Mitchell, *The Jesuits: A History* (London: Macdonald Futura Publishers, 1980), p. 150.
5. One of the most convenient summaries of the planting of the early *reducciones* is William V. Bangert, S.J., *A History of the Society of Jesus* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1972), pp. 168ff.
6. John E. Groh, "Antonio Ruíz de Montoya and the Early Reductions in the Jesuit Province of Paraguay", *The Catholic Historical Review*, LVI, no. 3 (October 1970), pp. 501-533.
7. Bangert, *A History of the Society of Jesus*, p. 259.
8. Mitchell, *The Jesuits: A History*, p. 194.
9. T. Frank Kennedy, S.J., "An Integrated Perspective: Music and Art in the Jesuit Reductions of Paraguay", in Christopher Chapple (ed.), *The Jesuit Tradition in Education and Missions* (Scranton: University of Scranton Press, 1993), pp. 215-225.
10. Marcus Cheke, *Dictator of Portugal: A Life of the Marquis of Pombal, 1699-1782* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson Ltd., 1938) remains a helpful biography.
11. Mitchell, *The Jesuits: A History*, p. 181.
12. Félix de Azara, *Descripción y historia del Paraguay y del Rio de la Plata*, quoted in H. McKennie Goodpasture (ed.), *Cross and Sword: An Eyewitness History of Christianity in Latin America* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1989), pp. 90-93.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 90.
14. Enrique Dussel (ed.), *The Church in Latin America 1492-1992* (Tunbridge Wells, Kent: Burns & Oates, 1992 and Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books,

- 1992).
15. Dussel, "General Introduction", in Dussel (ed.), *The Church in Latin America, 1492-1992*, p. 6.
 16. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
 17. Margarita Durán Estragó, "The Reductions", in Dussel (ed.), *The Church in Latin America, 1492-1992*, pp. 353-355.
 18. *Ibid.*, p. 355.
 19. *Ibid.*, p. 357.
 20. *Ibid.*, pp. 359-360.
 21. *Ibid.*, pp. 360-361.
 22. Michel Clévenot, "'The Kingdom of God on Earth'? The Jesuit Reductions of Paraguay", in Leonardo Boff and Virgil Elizondo (eds.), *Option for the Poor: Challenge to the Rich Countries* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986), pp. 70-77.

CHAPTER THREE

VOLTAIRE'S CRITIQUE AND DEFENCE OF THE *REDUCCIONES*

Introduction

Perhaps more lucidly in the works of François-Marie Arouet (1694-1778), popularly known to history as Voltaire, than in those of any other writer can one see the malleable rhetorical value of Jesuit history and the order's *reducciones* to contemporary causes. Both for this reason and because he antedated the other authors considered in this study, we shall begin our consideration with him. This amazingly flexible dramatist, essayist, and philosopher demonstrated how the undertaking amongst the Guaraní could be moulded like taffee to shape cases both for the abolition of the Society of Jesus and in support of at least some of its accomplishments. To be sure, Voltaire did not stand alone in exhibiting this talent. Such contemporaries as political philosopher Charles Louis de Secondat Montesquieu (1689-1755) and mathematician Jean le Rond d'Alembert (1717-1783) also joined in the mid-eighteenth-century campaign against the Jesuits while simultaneously or subsequently lauding some of their achievements in Latin America.

Voltaire's varying depictions of the Jesuits in general and particularly his portrayals of their missionary endeavours amongst the Guaraní must be seen as a pivotal part of his rôle in the greater Enlightenment crusade - to use the term loosely - against much that they disliked about the Roman Catholic Church, especially its general authoritarianism in an age when the philosophical foundations of the democratic state and popular sovereignty were being laid, the legacy of the Inquisition at a time when theological orthodoxy was facing severe international challenges, and the papacy when that institution was in the eyes of many observers both a religious and a political atavism. "Once we have destroyed the Jesuits, we shall have easy work with the Pope", Voltaire wrote.¹

Furthermore, it should be born in mind that Voltaire, like many of his intellectual and cultural counterparts in numerous European countries, regarded the European

colonisation of the “New World” as a morally questionable chapter in history and especially criticised the methods which *conquistadores* had employed in subduing indigenous peoples across the Atlantic. His perception of the endeavours of the Society of Jesus in the Spanish and Portuguese colonies of Latin America and especially its alleged participation in ethnic oppression was evidently coloured by this negative attitude. Yet a certain ambiguity is also evident in his attitude. In this respect, Voltaire joined men like Montesquieu and d’Alembert in praising the *reducciones* as a laudable counterweight to the rapacity of the *conquistadores* and as a model in social engineering.² Voltaire did not write extensively about Jesuit missions in South America, but his brief references to that chapter in ecclesiastical history are particularly pithy and pertinent to this study. Our treatment of this seminal Enlightenment figure is accordingly shorter than that of certain other authors.

Montesquieu’s Praise of Jesuit Endeavours in Paraguay

Slightly more than a decade before the publication of *Candide*, but during the campaign to limit the power of the Jesuits in Europe, one of the most intellectually impressive Frenchmen of the Enlightenment, Charles Louis de Secondat Montesquieu, could laud the Society of Jesus for what it accomplished amongst the indigenous peoples of Paraguay, although it should be emphasised from the outset that he did not have personal familiarity with those undertakings and mentioned them only in quite general terms. No friend of the Roman Catholic Church (which he had satirised mercilessly in his *Lettres persanes* of 1721 and thereby elicited the wrath of Cardinal Fleury) in the *ancien regime*, this political philosopher, often seen as a radical thinker in his own day, was quite prepared to acknowledge what he believed were praiseworthy accomplishments within Christianity across much of the denominational spectrum. His positive comments about the Jesuits in South America were recorded in Book Four of his renowned *De l’esprit des lois*, published in 1748. The brief sixth chapter of this section, titled “De quelques institutions des Grecs”, is devoted to the need to create just, enduring societies through the implementation of virtuous civic policies. Montesquieu looked to ancient Greece

for models to be emulated. Turning to his own day, like many other European intellectuals he thought he found another in William Penn's administration of the colony of Pennsylvania in North America. Farther south across the Atlantic, Montesquieu believed, "le Paraguay peut nous fournir un autre exemple". He readily conceded that the Society of Jesus was under fire in various quarters because of its authoritarian structure, but he averred that given the political conditions which obtained in South America the results of their labours indicated that some measure of authority was beneficial, as "il sera toujours beau de gouverner les hommes en les rendant heureux". Anticipating the countervailing argument that the Jesuits ruled the Guaraní with a heavy hand, Montesquieu explained in a footnote that the latter, whom he identified only as "les Indiens du Paraguay", paid only one-fifth of their produce as a tribute and that they bore firearms to protect themselves. placing the Jesuit undertaking into a broader historical context, he pulled out all the stops in declaring, "Il est glorieux pour elle d'avoir été la première qui ait montré dans ces contrées l'idée de la religion jointe à celle de l'humanité", and he illustrated this manifestation of religious humanitarianism by explaining that "En réparant les dévastations des Espagnols, elle a commencé à guérir un des grandes plaies qu'ait encore reçues le genre humain". Montesquieu did not mention the *reducciones* by name, but he described aspects of Jesuit missionary policy in terms which unmistakably refer to these communities. This was in the context of an accolade in which he paid tribute to the accomplishments and religious zeal of the Society of Jesus. "Elle a retiré des bois des peuples dispersés; elle leur a donné une subsistance assurée; elle les a vêtus; et, quand elle n'aurait fait par là qu'augmenter l'industrie parmi les hommes, elle auroit beaucoup fait".³

Candide

One late twentieth-century historian of the Society of Jesus called Voltaire's best-known work, his tale of 1759 *Candide*, "incomparably the most effective anti-Jesuit satire ever produced".⁴ This is a strong tribute, especially considering the amount and intensity of competition in the anti-Jesuit games of the eighteenth century,

and ultimately one that probably defies verification. Our present concern, however, is not with the influence of this small volume, but first with how its author depicted the Jesuits and their *reducciones* in it, and secondly how this portrayal reflects other issues of his own day.

One cannot begin to comprehend the purpose of *Candide* or the rôle of Voltaire's portrayal of the Jesuits in it without some awareness of the philosophical current at which this work is ostensibly aimed, namely Leibnizian theodicy. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716) remained a dominant force in German intellectual life and to a lesser extent influenced that of Europe beyond the periphery of the many German principalities. Widely regarded as a universal genius who received his doctorate at age twenty and went on to make his mark in logic, mathematics, jurisprudence, history, theology, and other disciplines, he propounded his views of the relationship between good, evil, and divine justice in his work of 1710, *Theodicée*. Leibniz did not deny the existence of either practical or metaphysical evil. Indeed, he stressed its inevitability owing to the finite nature inherent in every autonomous creature. Leibniz did, however, emphasise the interdependence of all creation in a universal harmony. To this German logician, God was omnipotent only in that he can do that which is logically possible. Leibniz did not allow that this included everything and specifically argued that some things could not happen or exist simultaneously, *i. e.* be "compossible". He argued that God had created this world with these limitations, and that therefore it is "the best of all possible worlds". His theodicy, however, was widely misinterpreted and reduced to the assumption that nothing could ultimately be interpreted as evil, and concomitantly events that to human eyes appeared evil ultimately served some positive end. *Candide* deals not with Leibnizian theodicy as such, but rather with this unrealistic vulgarisation of it, which tended not merely to misrepresent the thought of Leibniz severely, but also nurtured an unrealistic and downright saccharine perception of life during an age of frequent warfare, natural disasters, and other causes of widespread suffering. The full title of Voltaire's masterly work, *Candide, ou l'optimisme* is thus especially fitting.

Candide is a revolt against this optimism from first to last. In brief, it traces the sojourns of a young German man with the unlikely but self-revelatory name

Candide⁵ from Westphalia through Europe, South America, and Turkey in the 1750s and his efforts to cling to the vulgarised Leibnizian *Weltanschauung* in which he has been raised, despite suffering and witnessing constant and at times horrific tribulation for several years. Voltaire wastes no time in exposing this innocent and gentle youth to the violent woes of the world. In the first of the book's thirty brief chapters, Candide, who resides at the baron's castle in fictitious Thunder-ten-tronckh where his Leibnizian teacher Pangloss has taught him that this is the best of all possible worlds, becomes mildly affectionate with a winsome teenaged girl named Cunégonde and pays for his indiscretion by being kicked in the hindquarters and driven out of the castle by the baron. Outside the cosy womb of his childhood home, the expelled Candide is conscripted into an army and subjected to floggings and other brutal forms of military discipline. Shortly thereafter he witnesses the sanguine havoc wreaked by one of the many wars fought between German principalities and France during the eighteenth century. The scenes he views include the disemboweled bodies of civilians, brains and limbs torn from mutilated victims, and a village that has been burnt to the ground. Notwithstanding the carnage, Candide retains his Panglossian perception of the world and its history. In an obvious allegory of Jesus Christ's parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10, an Anabaptist, *i.e.* a religious nonconformist representing the despised radical wing of Protestantism that had suffered persecution in both Protestant and Roman Catholic lands since the middle of the sixteenth century, attends to the physical and economic needs of the hungry and wounded youth, for whom other Christians on both sides of the Rhine evince no concern. This episode about the horrors of warfare presages Voltaire's antagonistically satirical treatment of the Jesuits in Paraguay, as we shall see shortly.

Of particular interest is the tale of Pangloss, with whom Candide is briefly reunited early in his travels. Through the erstwhile courtly tutor Voltaire fires verbal salvos at the sexual immorality and hypocrisy of the clergy. Pangloss relates in Chapter Four how Paquette, a maidservant at their castle, has contracted a venereal disease, presumably syphilis, from a Franciscan. He traces the course of this case through several people, concluding that an unnamed but apparently either homosexual or bisexual Jesuit picked it up during his novitiate from a man who knew Christopher Columbus. The bizarre narrative also gives Pangloss another opportunity to see

the positive side of everything, in accordance with his interpretation of Leibniz. Pangloss accepts the disease in question as a necessary byproduct of the discovery of the Americas and the consequent availability of such products as chocolate. Furthermore, he is grateful that this disease is spreading rapidly in Europe and predicts that it will infect Asians within the next two centuries and sees this as part of the grand unfolding of history, especially because it will affect large mercenary armies. When Candide protests that nature is being disturbed, Pangloss insists that everything works for good in the long run. He argues to his former pupil that private misfortunes indirectly contribute to the public welfare and, extrapolating this line of thought a step further, contends that the greater amount of private misfortune there is, the greater the public benefit that will accrue.

In another early stab at the clergy, Voltaire relates in the tenth and thirteenth chapters how a long-sleeved Franciscan who stayed at a Spanish inn simultaneously with Candide and Cunégonde steals her jewellery but is apprehended before the young couple sail from Spain to South America. The cleric has attempted to sell the booty to a jeweller, who, however, identifies it as the property of the Grand Inquisitor. The Franciscan pays for his crime on the gallows. Again, Voltaire not merely pins a criminal offence on a man of the cloth but alludes to hypocrisy in the failure to honour religious vows.

Candide and Cunégonde survive further tribulations before reaching South America in Chapter Fourteen, where Voltaire takes his most direct shots at the Jesuits and their *reducciones*. The purpose of Candide's sojourn to the New World is to serve as a mercenary in a Spanish expeditionary force that intends to suppress the uprising against the transfer of seven *reducciones* from Spanish to Portuguese hegemony in accordance with the terms of the Treaty of Madrid of 1750. Voltaire thus uses another well-publicised contemporary event to lend currency to the lessons of his tale, especially to reinforce his message that the Jesuits are subversives. Before embarking at Cádiz, Candide hires a valet named Cacambo. This servant is the son of a *mestizo* in Argentina and has been a monk in an unspecified order. Voltaire does not thereby imply that Cacambo has been a Jesuit. This servant appears to be well-informed about their work in South America, however. Shortly after stepping ashore on that continent, he informs Candide that he not only has been in Paraguay,

but that he has been employed at a Jesuit institution there. He can thus pose as an authority on the regime of the Society of Jesus: “. . . j’ai été cuisinier dans le collège de l’Assomption, et je connais le gouvernement de Los Padres comme je connais les rues de Cadix”. Cacambo does not hesitate to pass a severe and sarcastic judgment on the form of government the Jesuits have imposed on their *reducciones*: “C’est une chose admirable que ce gouvernement. . . . Los Padres y ont tout, et les peuples rien; c’est le chef-d’œuvre de la raison et de la justice”. Their erstwhile employee continues Voltaire’s recurrent theme of hypocrisy in the clergy, adding to it an intercontinental element of duplicity. He tells Candide: “Pour moi je ne vois rien de si divin que Los Padres, qui font ici la guerre au roi d’Espagne et au roi de Portugal, et qui en Europe confessent ces rois; qui tuent ici des Espagnols, et qui à Madrid les envoient au ciel . . .”. As an afterthought, he adds that the Jesuits, in their resistance to Spanish and Portuguese authority, will be delighted to receive Candide as one who is familiar with German military drill. Convinced by this impeccable logic, Candide abandons his plans to participate in the campaign against the Jesuit resistance and decides instead to join it.

Subsequently in Chapter Fourteen Candide and Cacambo experience first-hand how ecclesiastical tradition and militarism go together at the *reducciones*. When they reach the first of these stations, they confront the unnamed commander, who wears a cassock but carries a pike and a sword. Similarly, the Provincial is unable to speak with them immediately, because he is away reviewing his troops after celebrating Mass. Instead, they are invited to the quarters of a German Jesuit military officer, a commander who receives them warmly in lavish surroundings. There is, however, a wide social cleft between at least this Jesuit and the indigenous people who eat their meal outdoors, one which *inter alia* alludes to the long-standing suspicion that the Society of Jesus was accumulating vast wealth through clandestine mining activities in South America: “Un excellent déjeuner était préparé dans des vases d’or; et tandis que les Paraguains mangèrent du maïs dans des écuelles de bois en plein champ à l’ardeur du soleil . . .”. The presence of African slaves in this Jesuit residence supplements the image of the exploitation of non-European peoples.

It soon becomes apparent that the host is the brother of Cunégonde. Candide and he embrace one another as long-lost acquaintances from Thunder-ten-tronckh. In Chapter Fifteen the commander relates how he became a Jesuit and how the Society of Jesus, preferring to have non-Spaniards at its *reducciones* in Spanish-America, had sent him to Paraguay. Voltaire then develops still further the linkage of the military and the religious spheres amongst the Jesuits. The commander informs Candide that he was initially a subdeacon and a lieutenant but has become a colonel and a priest. He confidently informs his young visitor that the Spanish forces whom his men shall face will be both defeated on the battlefield and excommunicated. The one calamity, it appears, is intimately related to the other, although Voltaire does not comment explicitly on the nature of this relationship. The cordiality comes to an abrupt end when Candide informs Cunégonde's religious brother that he intends to take her as his bride. Enraged, the commander declares that it would be scandalous for his younger sister to marry a commoner and strikes his face with the flat of his sword. Candide responds by drawing his own sword and running him through. He and Cacambo then flee; Candide wears his victim's Jesuit attire as a disguise.

In Chapter Sixteen Voltaire fires his final shots at the Society of Jesus, at least as far as the present work is concerned, although he would shortly resume the campaign in other books and other publications. The two men flee through the wilderness and save two young girls from pursuing monkeys. For their trouble they fall into the hands of indigenes whom Voltaire calls *Oreillons*. These people are *Orejones* in Spanish. *Les Oreillons* bind and threaten to eat Candide and Cacambo and are particularly pleased that they apparently have captured a detested Jesuit. Candide explains that his attire is merely a disguise and that this can be verified by merely going to the Jesuit *royaume* and enquiring whether a member of the order there has been slain and stripped of his clothing. Having done this, the *Oreillons* rejoice that their victim is not a Jesuit oppressor after all.

Resurrecting the Dead Image

Voltaire's attitudinal flag regarding the Society of Jesus hung in the winds of change which blew through France during the age of the Enlightenment. The extent to which he may have been influenced by the views of more tolerant contemporaries like Montesquieu is difficult to ascertain. In any case, in his *Essai sur les mœurs*, published in several editions after 1756, he took a position which partially reversed the stance he had assumed *vis-à-vis* the Jesuits in *Candide* and which suggests at least some common ground between him and Montesquieu in this regard, if not necessarily a direct, causal relationship.⁶ Voltaire began the one hundred fifty-fourth brief chapter of that work with terms which in their severity certainly echoed those which Montesquieu had employed in describing the Spanish conquest of much of the Western Hemisphere. "Les conquêtes du Mexique et du Pérou sont des prodiges d'audace", he averred; "les cruautés qu'on y a exercées, l'extermination entière des habitants de Saint-Domingue et de quelques autres îles, sont des excès d'horreur". In stark contrast to this savage oppression stood the Catholic missionary endeavours under consideration: "Mais l'établissement dans le Paraguay par les seuls jésuites espagnols paraît à quelques égards le triomphe de l'humanité; il semble expier les cruautés des premiers conquérants". It seems entirely plausible that with these lines Voltaire was paraphrasing Montesquieu's similar assessment in *De l'esprit des lois*, even though Voltaire mistakenly assumed that the Jesuits whose work he now lauded were generally Spanish, when in fact they were a multinational association of men. Expanding on the brief reference to William Penn which Montesquieu had made, Voltaire then placed the Quakers and the Jesuits into the same context with regard to their relations with indigenous peoples in the Americas: "Les quakers dans l'Amérique septentrionale, et les jésuites dans la méridionale, ont donné un nouveau spectacle au monde. Les primitifs ou quakers ont adouci les mœurs des sauvages voisins de la Pensylvanie; ils les ont instruits seulement par l'exemple, sans attenter à leur liberté, et ils leur ont procuré de nouvelles douceurs de la vie par le commerce". Meanwhile, "les jésuites se sont à la vérité servis de la religion pour ôter la liberté aux peuplades du Paraguay". To these missionaries, it had been "une vertu

de soumettre des sauvages par l'instruction et par la persuasion". Voltaire acknowledged the success of their approach. "L'établissement a commencé par cinquante familles, et il monta en 1750 à près de cent mille. Les jésuites, dans l'espace d'un siècle, ont formé trente cantons, qu'ils appellent *le pays des missions*; chacun contient jusqu'à présent environ dix mille habitants". Anticipating criticism that the Jesuit regime had become a paternalistic dictatorship of the Guaraní, Voltaire explained that representatives of the Society of Jesus attended to the marketing of the agricultural produce and furnished the high command of the militias at the *reducciones* but insisted that this arrangement had been beneficial to all concerned: "Un jésuite était préposé à l'exercice; après quoi les armes étaient reportées dans l'arsenal, et il n'était permis à aucun citoyen d'en garder dans sa maison". The results of this policy seemed sufficient to Voltaire to justify it: "Les mêmes principes qui ont fait de ces peuples les sujets les plus soumis en ont fait de très-bons soldats; ils croient obéir et combattre par devoir". In light of all this and other facets of the case he had built for toleration of the Society of Jesus, Voltaire thought it both ironic and a setback for the progress of religious freedom that that organisation was gradually being suppressed. He concluded his chapter about the Jesuits by noting that "ils ont été chassés du Portugal en 1758" and that "le gouvernement portugais en a purgé toutes ses colonies d'Amérique". Furthermore, "ils ont été chassés de tous les États du roi d'Espagne, dans l'ancien et dans le nouveau monde" and that both the French Parliaments and the Vatican had taken actions to curb the Society of Jesus. All of this heavy-handed conduct offended Voltaire's campaign for religious freedom and presumably prompted him to write favourably about the achievements of the Jesuit missionaries in the New World.⁷

Advocacy of religious freedom and human dignity across national and ethnic lines was thus the common source of fuel which drove Voltaire's literary treatment of the Jesuits' undertakings amongst the Guaraní. When he had reason to believe that representatives of the Society of Jesus in South America as well as in Europe were abusing their power and treating other people in a manner which violated his sense of dignity and his understanding of the rise of the human race from barbarism to a cultivated state, he pilloried them mercilessly. On the other hand, when the Jesuits came under fire as the victims of authoritarianism, Voltaire could

just as readily dash to their defence and seek to call attention to the discrepancy between their accomplishments and the way in which both secular authorities and the Vatican were handling them. Against this background, we now turn to two twentieth-century writers who wrote tendentiously about the Society of Jesus in Paraguay and elected to shape their presentations of the historic missionary endeavours in question so as to relate them to contemporary causes which they championed.

Notes

1. Quoted in David Mitchell, *The Jesuits. A History* (London: Macdonald Futura Publishers, 1980), p. 202.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 206.
3. Charles Montesquieu, *Œuvres complètes*. (ed. Roger Caillois). Vol. II (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1951), pp. 267-269.
4. J.C.H. Aveling, *The Jesuits* (London: Blond & Briggs, 1981), p. 40.
5. The French adjective *candide* is, of course, a cognate of the English *candid*; both words trace their origin to the Latin *candidus*. Despite their common etymology, however, they mean different things. *Candide* corresponds approximately to “ingenuous”, “guileless”, or “naïve”, while the English adjective “candid” is best rendered into French as *sincère*.
6. Internal evidence, such as a reference to the expulsion of the Society of Jesus from Spain and its royal dominions in 1767, proves that the version of the *Essai sur les mœurs* used in the present study postdates the publication of *Candide*.
7. *Œuvres complètes de Voltaire. Essai sur les mœurs*. Vol. II (Paris: Garnier Frères, Libraires-Éditeurs, 1878), pp. 523-529.

CHAPTER FOUR

R.B. CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM'S *A VANISHED ARCADIA*

Introduction

We turn now to our second major example of strategic rhetorical use of the history of Jesuit missions in South America. For decades R.B. Cunninghame Graham's amateur history, *A Vanished Arcadia*, reigned as the standard English-language work about the Jesuit enterprise amongst the Guaraní. This "treatise of a forgotten subject by a labourer unskilled", as its author modestly called it and himself,¹ initially published in 1901 and resting on fairly extensive if by subsequent scholarly standards hardly adequate research in both historical sources and secondary works, merits our attention because it relates directly to central concerns of our larger study. *A Vanished Arcadia* reflects lucidly the background and prejudices of its author and helped to establish the somewhat romanticised impression of the work of the Society of Jesus in Latin America which has resounded in many subsequent considerations of that theme, including Fritz Hochwälder's influential drama *Das heilige Experiment* and Robert Bolt's screenplay of *The Mission*. It is also clearly a product of its time, a pro-communitarian, anti-capitalist, and anti-imperialist treatise which tells us nearly as much about Cunninghame Graham as a prominent socialist Labour politician in Victorian Britain as it does about the Jesuits, the Guaraní, or missions history. Interestingly enough, this curious volume, which some might regard as of little more than antiquarian value, was reprinted by another British publisher in 1988,² possibly to capitalise on interest in its otherwise neglected and arcane subject which the film *The Mission* had aroused in the British public. Very little scholarly attention has been paid to *A Vanished Arcadia*, however. Cunninghame Graham's dotting biographer, A.F. Tschiffely, wrote well over 400 pages about "Don Roberto", as he called him, without making more than one fleeting reference to that book.³

It should be emphasised at the outset that Cunninghame Graham was not a particularly refined thinker and certainly neither an economist nor a social philosopher. Furthermore, it would be unrealistic and anachronistic to seek in A

Vanished Arcadia a fully developed and distinct projection of British socialist ideology, because at the time of its publication socialism was still in a relatively early and indistinct stage in Britain, both politically and intellectually. To be sure, many people in the United Kingdom had proposed alternatives to the capitalist system, some of them incorporating state ownership of the means of production, but at the turn of the century consensus was yet to be reached. Arguably it was never was, as the continuing deep differences of opinion within the Labour Party suggest. In any case, Marxist “scientific socialism” had not made a distinct mark on people like Cunninghame Graham. He wrote more in the tradition of romantic socialism associated with the Anglo-Catholic William Morris (1834-1896), who founded the Hammersmith Socialist Society in 1890 and emphasised the centrality of fellowship and organisation, not revolution, in achieving the goals of a classless and prosperous society. The two men collaborated at times, as in the “Bloody Sunday” demonstration of 13 November 1887 in favour of home rule for Ireland. Cunninghame Graham was one of the speakers at the weekly meetings of the Hammersmith Socialist Society, and he accompanied Morris’ body to a cemetery in the churchyard of Kelmscott in Oxfordshire.⁴ Subsequently he contributed an essay titled “With the North-West Wind” about the funeral to *The Saturday Review*. In this piece Cunninghame Graham lampooned the dons of Oxford, which was Morris’ *alma mater*, and made oblique and sneering allusions to Matthew Arnold and to Cecil John Rhodes, who was then engaged in the incorporation of Matabeleland (part of what was subsequently called Rhodesia) in the British Empire.⁵ Furthermore, as will become apparent shortly, Cunninghame Graham’s work, like much of that of Morris, bears clearly the imprint of Romanticism, both ideologically and aesthetically. The socialism that these men represented was thus not that which Marx had proclaimed and Lenin would develop into a revolutionary programme.

The title of Cunninghame Graham’s book deserves brief consideration. In the general literary tradition of Western civilisation, “Arcadia” is derived from the Greek cognate *Ἀρκαδία*, which is the ancient name of a mountainous district in the Peloponnese. For centuries the term has been used poetically to refer to a region of rural contentment. The *Oxford English Dictionary* indicates that in English literature it has occurred in this sense since the sixteenth century. The word thus has not only poetic but also slightly mythical connotations and does not lend itself

to literal application. It is not to be confused with "Utopia", which by strict definition cannot exist in this world.

Scottish *Hidalgo* or Revolutionary Socialist?

Though by no means a professionally trained historian, Cunninghame Graham approached his task with a keen personal interest in his subject and at least some of the requisite skills to pursue research in it. His pedigree gave him an advantage in this respect. He was born in Scotland in 1852. The paternal side of his family tree was Scottish and moderately wealthy. Cunninghame Graham's maternal grandmother, however, was from a noble Spanish family. He was bilingual from an early age and accordingly evinced strong interests in the Hispanic world. This was almost inevitable, as he spent much of his childhood in Cádiz, Spain, although the youth was also educated for two years at Harrow. Bringing his formal education to a halt, he sailed to Argentina to seek his fortune in 1869. Cunninghame Graham did not find it, but he secured employment as a *gaucho* and a mercenary in the Uruguayan army. His *Wanderlust* kept him on that continent for most of the 1870s, although his stay was interrupted by trips home to Scotland and to Canada. In 1878 he married a young woman of Chilean birth but French and Spanish descent who accompanied him to Texas the following year. The ranch they established in the Lone Star State failed financially, as did other ventures. In accord with his personality, he struck up a friendship with "Buffalo Bill" Cody during this period. The Cunninghame Grahams returned to Britain in the early 1880s and settled on his ancestral domain of Gartmore in Scotland.⁶

By then Cunninghame Graham's interests had expanded to include politics. This too would influence his perception of the Jesuit missionary undertaking about which he would write many years later. He represented North-West Lanarkshire in Parliament from 1886 until 1892, initially as a Liberal, but, working in tandem with James Keir Hardie (1856-1915), founded the Scottish Labour Party in Glasgow in August 1888 as an amalgamation of previously existing small groups and served as that body's honorary president while Hardie was its first secretary. One of the issues which gained Cunninghame Graham national notoriety was his advocacy

of the eight-hour workday, a notion then so radical that even some Liberals, such as John Morley, opposed it. Cunninghame Graham resigned his constituency in 1892 in order to stand for a Glasgow one in the election of that year but lost badly and subsequently played only a minor rôle in British politics. In terms of their backgrounds, the two men differed markedly. Hardie was born out of wedlock and never received even the rudiments of a formal education. He went to work when only eight years old and became a coal miner at the tender age of ten. Hardie participated in strikes during the 1870s, and in the following decade he became both a leader of a miners' organisation and the editor of his own newspapers in which he advocated Christian Socialist positions on both economic and political issues. It was while thus employed that he joined forces with his agnostic and multilingual countryman who had recently returned from the Americas.

In his political life Cunninghame Graham partly embraced Marxism without becoming - despite his sometimes fiery rhetoric - a militant socialist as the international labour movement evolved and well before it spawned twentieth-century revolutionary communism. Both before and after the end of his career in the House of Commons, he and his fellows crossed verbal swords with Tories and Liberals alike, the latter under the leadership of William Ewart Gladstone (1809-1898), who served as prime minister intermittently between 1868 until 1894. In 1893 the Independent Labour Party, a forerunner of the twentieth-century Labour Party, was established as the principal and enduring political vehicle of the socialist movement in Britain, although it also included men who disavowed the socialist label. Many members of this avowedly anti-capitalist movement generally favoured the nationalising of "the means of production and exchange", though others did not. A detailed consideration of the other issues on which the Labourites differed with the Liberals lies outside the parameters of the present study.

The issue of imperialism also set Cunninghame Graham and other proto-Labourites apart from the Conservatives and some Liberals, although the lines of demarcation did not always run neatly between the various parties. For decades British politicians, educators, and even many clergymen had fostered the myth that the Empire was not merely an extension of the national economy but part of a divinely willed campaign to bestow morality and civilisation on parts of the world in which those intangible commodities ostensibly had been in short supply. Moreover,

imperialism was believed to elevate domestic ethical standards, not merely those of colonised peoples. Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881), the Tory leader who had served briefly as prime minister in 1868 and would occupy that post again from 1874 until 1880, could remark unabashedly to a cheering audience at the annual conference of the National Union of Conservative and Constitutional Associations at Crystal Palace in 1872 that even though the colonies were arguably a burden on the national economy in a purely monetary sense, criticism of imperialism failed to take into consideration the ethical benefits of imperialism. He took to task Liberal critics of the Empire for “totally ignoring those moral and political considerations which make nations great, and by which men are distinguished from animals”. Disraeli thought it a partisan campaign, declared that “if the first great object of the Tory party is to maintain the institutions of the country, the second is to maintain the Empire of England”. In contrast to the salvific deeds of his Conservative Party in preserving the humanity of the British by striving towards those goals, the Liberals had toiled for forty years “to effect the disintegration of the Empire”.⁷

In fact, many Liberals shared this perception of supposedly beneficent imperialism and did little or nothing to diminish the Empire, despite the frequency of Liberal suggestions for expanding self-governance within it. The Empire remained very much intact during the great age of the Liberal Party, when it was victorious in no fewer than seven general elections between 1868 and 1916. The myth of Britain’s global moral rôle, moreover, remained alive throughout the Victorian era and well into the twentieth century. As Correlli Barnett has remarked of this period in his in places brilliant study of *The Collapse of British Power*, “to bring British rule to the coloured heathen and at the same time keep him from falling under French or German rule was seen as a great idealistic mission; evangelism in the red coat of imperialism”.⁸ Barnett lays much of the blame for this attitude at the doorsteps of the public schools which stood apart from the harsh economic realities of domestic life but educated generations of romantic politicians and the churches, both Anglican and, especially, nonconformist, for seeking in too simplistic a fashion to apply Christian moral principles to all aspects of life, including the international political sphere.⁹ To the extent that this is true, it applies only slightly to Cunninghame Graham. To be sure, he attended a public school briefly, but that dimension of his formation does not appear to have shaped his personality and beliefs

to more than a small extent. Furthermore, at no time in his life is Cunninghame Graham known to have come under the influence of any church to a noteworthy degree and, as we shall see, he disavowed having any conventional religious beliefs.

While Conservatives provided much of the impetus for the neo-imperialism that ran strong in British thought and foreign policy during the 1890s, many Liberals supported this movement, not least the extension of the Empire to places like Uganda and what became Rhodesia. To be sure, some Liberals opposed on idealistic grounds the domination of one nation or people by another. As has been pointed out, however, Liberal idealism could cut both ways on the issue of imperialism, at least as long as the debate over it remained primarily anthropological, following Darwin, and avoided the primacy of economic matters. Michael Bentley has summarised the ambivalence of the Liberals' response during the 1890s thus: "Idealism . . . tugged against the pull of imperialism at least in the sense that it rejected as offensive to self-realization the subjection of one man's will to another's. But so long as the imperialists could claim that they acted on behalf of annexation precisely in order to further the self-development of 'primitive' areas, then Idealists could only applaud".¹⁰

Eventually, around the turn of the century, imperialism faced weighty challenges. One of the most serious came from the classic study by John Atkinson Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study*, which was published in 1902. Hobson (1858-1940), an independent economist and a Liberal of the Gladstonian school who eventually became a socialist and whose theories presaged those of John Maynard Keynes, adduced a massive amount of statistical and other data in arguing that far from being essentially a moral crusade, imperialism was indeed an economic phenomenon. He reasoned further that it was an immoral, hypocritical, and unprofitable exploitation of less developed regions of the world to serve selfish national ends.¹¹ This, of course, meshed well with what both Marxist and non-Marxist socialists had contended for many years.

The Second Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902 revealed more vividly than anything hitherto that not all Liberals spoke with one voice on the question of imperialism. The ultimately only marginally successful British attempt to incorporate the independent Orange Free State and the South African Republic into the Empire proved costly and lasted much longer than initially anticipated. Public debates

consequently showed a growing discontent with the initially popular military effort. Many Liberals, such as Archibald Rosebery (1847-1929), who had served briefly as prime minister in 1894 and 1895, remained emphatically imperial, although this alienated him from many of his party colleagues. A growing faction identified with subsequent prime minister David Lloyd George came out against the war and openly advocated the Boer cause, as did some socialists. It was precisely at the time of this waxing controversy, of course, that Cunninghame Graham penned *A Vanished Arcadia*.

It should not be assumed, however, that all Labourites categorically opposed imperialism and advocated the immediate dismantling of the British Empire. Even the socialist Labourite James Keir Hardie, who stood near the left pole of the party, took a cautious position on this general question. When he visited India on his global tour in 1907, agitation for independence from the Empire was growing, not least because Mohandas K. Gandhi had temporarily returned to that country from South Africa and had begun his campaign of passive resistance to British rule. Hardie wrote guardedly: "It may be that the people of India are not yet fit for the colonial form of self-government, but . . . sooner or later a beginning must be made towards enfranchising the masses and opening the way for the educated native to fill the higher and better paid positions".¹²

Another central question which set many but not all Labourites sharply apart from most Liberals and many Conservatives was that of free trade, a defining cause of the Liberal Party for decades in Victorian Britain. Stemming originally from theoreticians like Adam Smith late in the eighteenth century, the demand for the dismantling of protective tariffs in Britain and, by extension, internationally resounded in the rhetorical halls of Liberalism throughout the Victorian age. One early and historically very significant advocate was Richard Cobden (1804-1865), a calico printer in Lancashire who travelled extensively in Europe, North America, and the Middle East and served in the House of Commons with only one brief interruption from 1847 until his death. In the 1830s he organised the Anti-Corn Law League, which became a national body in 1839. Its purpose was to work for the abolition of protective tariffs on cereals. In Cobden's view, they benefitted only the landlords and were thus economically irresponsible and morally indefensible. In a classic statement of his position on the issue, this prominent free trader declared without

rhetorical flourish that “what we desire is plenty of corn, and we are utterly careless what its price is, provided we obtain it at the natural price”. To Cobden, keenly aware of the plight of the working class at the mercy of the Industrial Revolution, it seemed only fair to let the market determine what that price would be: “All we ask is this, that corn shall follow the same law which the monopolists in food admit that labour must follow; that ‘it shall find its natural level in the markets of the world’”. He denied that opening the British market to more imported cereals would impair domestic agriculture and predicted that sharpened competition would actually increase agricultural production in Britain.¹³ Cobden’s crusade was successful, culminating in the abrogation of the Corn Laws in 1846. He also played a formative rôle in the belief that free trade was not only economically beneficial but would also foster world peace. As Cobden remarked in 1844, open markets would break down “the barriers that separate nations; those barriers, behind which nestle the feelings of pride, revenge, hatred, and jealousy, which every now and then burst their bounds, and deluge whole countries with blood; those feelings which nourish the poison of war and conquest . . .”.¹⁴

The conviction that *laissez-faire* capitalism extended to its supposedly “natural” international limits would benefit humanity generally and promote global harmony remained firmly entrenched in Liberalism throughout the Victorian era and was only moderately challenged late in the nineteenth century. The veteran Liberal Gladstone confessed his faith in it on countless occasions. As he put it in 1890 between his third and fourth spells as prime minister, when he argued “for leaving trade to the operation of natural laws in the simplest manner”, legislative bodies “ought never to interfere, or only to interfere so far as imperative fiscal necessity may require it, with this natural law of distribution”. Gladstone was convinced that recent British history, not least developments following the abrogation of the Corn Laws, proved this point and, conversely, that “all protection is morally as well as economically bad”. Appealing to his half-century in public life, he wrote, “I have seen and known, and had the opportunity of comparing, the temper and frame of mind engendered first by our protectionism, which we now look back upon as servitude, and then by the commercial freedom and equality which we have enjoyed for the last thirty or forty years”. The results seemed conclusive: “The

one tended to harden into positive selfishness; the other has done much to foster a more liberal tone of mind".¹⁵

These words expressed the conviction of at least two generations of British Liberal thinkers. It was endlessly contended that free trade would nurture international harmony and peace while maintaining the pre-eminence of Britain as a world power. In reality, however, there was little peace in Europe or most other parts of the globe, and within a few decades of emerging victorious from the Napoleonic Wars Britain was losing its once undisputed ranking in geopolitical terms, notwithstanding the inability of many Britons to see, let alone acknowledge, that the balance of power in Europe was shifting in favour of Germany, especially after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. The change was not merely political, but also economic. British exports continued to flow throughout much of the world, but they faced increasingly stiff competition as the Industrial Revolution made its mark across Europe. In fact, the monetary value of such exports decreased by approximately 10 per cent during the last two decades of the nineteenth century, while in production of steel Britain took third place behind Germany and the United States of America. Inexpensive cereals from the fields of North America and other parts of the globe flowed unabated into the British market, reducing profits for farmers in the United Kingdom. The doctrine of free trade nevertheless remained fixed in the Liberal creed, but many other countries remained unconvinced of its value and refused to dismantle protectionist barriers. The concept lost much of its meaning when reciprocity was absent. In this new context, Barnett has observed, Liberal idealism placed Britain at a grave disadvantage, "for other great powers did not see the world as one great human society, but - just as the British had done up to the nineteenth century - as an arena where, subject to the mutual convenience of diplomatic custom, nation-states - the highest effective form of human society - competed for advantage". As the British would rediscover in 1914, the world was a violent place, and Britain was not immune to its savagery. On the Continent, this historical lesson of *Realpolitik* had not been forgotten in some countries. In contrast to many British idealists, the informed citizens of those lands "did not believe in a natural harmony among mankind, but in natural interests that might sometimes coincide with the interests of others, sometimes conflict", Barnett has generalised. "It followed that they considered that relations between states were governed not by law, nor even by moral principle,

but by power and ambition restrained only by prudent calculation and a sense of moderation. War therefore, in their view was not a lamentable breakdown of a natural harmony called peace, but an episode of violence in a perpetual struggle".¹⁶

Many Labourites, especially those of socialist bent, continued to believe that world peace could be attained through the empowerment of the working class, *i.e.* the masses in countries that were jockeying for international power. They put little faith in the capacity of free trade policies, as an extension of capitalism, to neutralise the factors that precipitated warfare. Men like Keir Hardie were especially vocal in their denunciation of international *laissez-faire* capitalism as a panacea for the social and economic ills of Britain, which remained conspicuous during the Gladstonian era. To Hardie, positions for and against free trade were the antiquated Tweedle Dum and Tweedle Dee of capitalism as it marched towards its grave. "Free-trade, Fair-trade, and Protectionist cries are rapidly becoming things of the past", he contended in 1888, shortly after his Scottish Labour Party was constituted. "They still linger with us like old worn-out ecclesiastical dogmas, but the life that warmed them into active being is now flickering to its close". Hardie found it morally offensive that politicians debated this issue perennially while capital exploited the masses: "Statesmen declaim, politicians rave, and economists wrangle on the social condition of the people; but, while their encounters proceed, humanity in the form of the helpless poor is being done to death". His solution transcended the protracted controversy: "The only possible remedy is a new economic departure, in which our entire industrial society shall be worked on the principle of one vast co-operative camp. This would mean the advent of economic Socialism, which is demanded alike by reason and equity".¹⁷

It should be emphasised, however, that his fellow Labourites did not speak with one voice on this question. Some, such as James Ramsay MacDonald, shared the Liberal hope and believed that free trade would contribute to world peace and a spirit of internationalism. Others disagreed, arguing that only the interests of capital and not those of the downtrodden British working class would be best served by internationally open markets. This division of opinion would continue in Labour circles for many decades and find expression in the opposition of Prime Minister Harold Wilson to entrance in the European Common Market during the 1960s and early 1970s while his Labourite comrade Roy Jenkins enthusiastically led the

successful campaign for membership in that organisation in 1972. Cunninghame Graham, as we shall see, stood squarely in the ranks of those who opposed free trade.

One other, more specific, cause which Cunninghame Graham had begun to support more than a decade earlier may have some analogous relevance to his interest in the freedom of the Jesuits and their Guaraní charges in Paraguay. With characteristic aplomb, Cunninghame Graham became an ardent supporter of home rule for Ireland after spending only a few days on the Emerald Isle and would eventually attend the funeral of Charles Parnell, supposedly the only non-Irish Member of Parliament to do so. The forty-five-year-old politician gained particular notoriety in this cause when in November 1887 when he participated in the “Bloody Sunday” demonstration in Trafalgar Square to demand the release from prison of the Irish Nationalist William O’Brien. For Cunninghame Graham this action backfired; he suffered a cranial injury from a police baton, was arrested, together with an engineer named John Burns charged with “unlawfully and riotously assembling together to the terror of Her Majesty’s subjects”, and eventually sentenced to six weeks’ incarceration in Pentonville Prison.¹⁸ From his cell Cunninghame Graham wryly wired the organising committee this assurance: “No harm, but broken head”.¹⁹ This period of incarceration ended on 18 February 1888 and by no means broke him in either body or spirit. Indeed, *The Times* reported that when he walked out of the institution to be greeted by supporters who had gathered outside its gates at 6h00 and offered him meat pies which he consumed with apparent gratitude, he “looked somewhat better than when he was sentenced”. Cunninghame Graham dismissed as unfounded rumours that he would re-enter the House of Commons clad in a facsimile of his prison uniform. In a speech delivered to the crowd that met him, he declared that he had gone to prison to uphold the freedom of expression cherished by all Britons. In a poetic flourish, Cunninghame Graham alluded to the witches’ brew in *Macbeth* to describe the “miserable Government”: “Scale of Tory, tooth of prig, Union mummy, Belfast Whig; Country squire and Joseph Screw, Humbugging and blaspheming Jew”. Putting aside the doggerel, he asked whether Britain would fare better under a Liberal government. Answering his own rhetorical question, the convicted Member of Parliament thought the Liberals could govern properly only if the people united behind them, a development he did not foresee,

and prevented the government from reverting to its conventional purpose of protecting the interests of the wealthy by saddling the masses with excessive taxes. Instead, “every one convicted of that unpardonable sin of poverty was going to unite in the demand that there should be a change in the social circumstances of the people”, Cunninghame Graham predicted. Yet he emphasised that this metamorphosis could not be brought about by violent means: “But a revolution could be as sweeping and would have as searching an effect by means of the ballot-boxes as it could be by the effusion of blood”, he insisted to the enthusiastic cries of his audience. Cunninghame Graham boldly predicted that if the common people of Britain would exercise the political power at their disposal, “they could so modify the look of all England that in 10 years a man who had been away from the country that time would not know it”.²⁰

Not only in the streets of London and in Scotland but also in the House of Commons Cunninghame Graham gained a reputation for being passionately outspoken about causes which he championed and was once suspended for employing intemperate language in that assembly. According to an undocumented comment about the matter in the article about Cunninghame Graham in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, his offence was “said to have been” using the word “damn” during a speech.²¹ This appears to be apocryphal. The standard index to *The Times* of London mentions only one such incident involving him. On 1 December 1888 the neophyte Member of Parliament protested when his suggestion for devoting a day to discussing a motion relating to the chainmakers of Cradley-Heath was rejected on the grounds that the Speaker was “unable to make any other disposition of business than that already made”. Cunninghame Graham responded by calling this answer a “dishonourable trick”. The Speaker demanded that he withdraw that comment, which he refused to do. Consequently, the Speaker asked him to leave the chamber.²²

Cunninghame Graham could be equally outspoken beyond the national borders of the United Kingdom as he was in the House of Commons. One such incident occurred in May 1891 following the violent consequences of a demonstration in France. This took place in the small but economically significant city of Fourmies in the north-western part of the country only a few kilometres from the Belgian border. The factories of Fourmies produced textiles, glasswares, and other goods. Approximately 1 500 striking employees of some of these firms staged a protest

on 1 May. An infantry battalion that had been mobilised to keep the peace fired on the demonstrators directly in front of the city hall, killing nine of them, two of whom were children, and wounding approximately sixty more. This bloody episode in French labour history pricked the conscience of much of the public and is believed to have been instrumental in accelerating the evolution of the labour movement in France in the direction of socialism.

News of the massacre soon gained a small degree of attention in Britain, where it especially angered Labourites like Cunninghame Graham, some of whom had emphasised the international dimensions of their incipient political crusade. He promptly crossed the English Channel to Calais and addressed a politically sympathetic assembly in French. As reported in *The Times* two days later, Cunninghame Graham had begun with a *captatio benevolentiae*, declaring, "Whenever there has been revolution in the world or progress of mankind, France has been foremost, her blood has been the first to be spilt". He then paid tribute to the fallen by placing them into the framework of socialist history: "The dead of Fourmies are the first victims of the social revolution which is in the course of being accomplished. Rest assured that the Socialist party of the whole world will remember it, and that on the day of demands and vengeance it will pay France the Socialist debt it has just contracted". This implied threat, though oblique, angered the minister of the interior sufficiently to take action against Cunninghame Graham. When he returned to his hotel to spend the night, the local police commissary confronted him with an order of deportation. The unwelcome Briton was promptly escorted to a steamer bound for Dover and informed that if he returned to France without permission he would be liable to a maximum of six months' imprisonment.²³ Perhaps better than nearly anything in his domestic political career, this incident illustrates Cunninghame Graham's revolutionary temperament in the early 1890s, particularly his ability to perceive international historical developments in the light of his personal ideology.

Subsequently Cunninghame Graham became at least partly disillusioned with the increasingly doctrinaire and inflexible path of Keir Hardie's brand of socialism in Britain as it moved towards the formation of the Labour Party shortly after the beginning of the twentieth century and turned his attention to the cause of Scottish nationalism, presiding over the Scottish Home Rule Association and political parties which worked for that end. He devoted a greater amount of time

to his writing. When he wrote *A Vanished Arcadia* at the turn of the century he was living on Sloane Street in south-west London. Near the conclusion of his career, in 1928 he lost to Stanley Baldwin an election to the post of lord rector of the University of Glasgow by only sixty-six votes.²⁴

Cunninghame Graham's interests also broadened to encompass writing, as did those of his artistically gifted wife, and he developed friendships with many of the prominent men of letters of his day. Eventually he would write approximately thirty books of greatly varying quality as well as numerous shorter pieces. His forays into the world of fiction yielded mainly short stories based on his adventuresome peripatetic life. In nonfiction, Cunninghame Graham focused his attention on the history of his native Scotland and Latin America, writing numerous biographical studies set in those regions as well as in Morocco, where he also spent time. Despite his keen interest in certain aspects of Roman Catholic history, especially that of Iberia and Latin America, he was not a practising member of the Church of Rome but reportedly "claimed complete agnosticism" in spiritual matters.²⁵ Nothing in his written works suggests otherwise. Indeed, the tone of his history of the Jesuit undertaking in Paraguay reflects this attitude, as our analysis of that book will make clear.

Stated Purposes and Research Methodology

In his Preface, Cunninghame Graham both poses the question which he hopes to answer and obliquely does so. "My only interest in the matter is how the Jesuits' rule acted upon the Indians themselves, and if it made them happy - more happy or less happy than those Indians who were directly ruled from Spain, or through the Spanish Governors of the viceroyalties", he declares flatly. Cunninghame Graham disavows equally candidly and with no mean scepticism any concern about "theories of advancement, and as to whether certain arbitrary ideas of the rights of man, evolved in general by those who in their persons and their lives are the negation of all rights . . .". He is content merely to demonstrate to his own satisfaction that in practical, mundane terms the Jesuit experiment was successful, both in their eyes and in his own:

That the Jesuits rendered the Indians happy is certain, though to those men who fudge a theory of mankind, thinking that everyone is forged upon their anvil, or run out of their own mould, after the fashion of a tallow dip (a theory which, indeed, the sameness of mankind renders at times not quite untenable), it seems absurd, because the progress of the world has gone on other lines - lines which prolonged indefinitely would never meet those which the Jesuits drew.²⁶

Cunninghame Graham's initial evidence in support of this early conclusion is highly subjective and only remotely empirical. "All that I know is I myself, in the deserted missions, spoke regretfully of Jesuit times, who cherished all the customs left by the Company, and though they spoke at secondhand, repeating but the stories they had heard in youth, kept the illusion that the missions in the Jesuits' time had been a paradise".²⁷ This is hardly accurate; when Cunninghame Graham visited Paraguay in the 1870s the Jesuits had been gone for more than a century. His willingness to draw even preliminary conclusions on the basis of hearsay perhaps three or four generations removed from even the last few decades of the Jesuit presence amongst the Guaraní both confirms his self-effacing statements about his lack of training as an historian and foreshadows a general tendency to draw inferences on the basis of secondary works and a very circumscribed method. Early in Chapter One, Cunninghame Graham shifts gears slightly and, with regard to the Jesuits, announces in enhanced detail that "what was the nature of their success, how durable it was, what were the reasons which caused the expulsion of the order from America, and especially from Paraguay, and what has been the result upon the remainder of the Indians, it is my object to endeavour to explain".²⁸

What becomes apparent with regard to the question of motivation as one carefully peruses *A Vanished Arcadia* is that Cunninghame Graham is concerned not only with Jesuit missions in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries but also with imperialism during his own day and, intimately related to this, defending his socialistic economic views. At times he beats his anti-imperial drum loudly, at other times with muffled sticks, using the confrontation of the Jesuits with self-serving governmental and economic interests to expose the destructive powers of imperialism and unbridled capitalism in historical context. Again and again Cunninghame Graham

gives his points explicit currency by drawing parallels with contemporary phenomena in either his main text or his footnotes. In this respect, *A Vanished Arcadia* is an unabashed example of tendentious historiography. We shall examine examples of this tendentiousness in our overall consideration of the book.

Cunninghame Graham's research for this volume rested on his extensive travels in South America and his reading of both primary and secondary materials in the Romance languages. The former experience, both in the 1870s and subsequently, allowed him not only to make the shaky generalisations cited above about the success of the Jesuit missions in engendering happiness amongst the Guaraní but also imparted what appears to have been a fairly solid knowledge of the geography of the Rio de la Plata and surrounding areas. He quite modestly states that he inspected the remains of nearly all the *reducciones* in question and that these visits, together with one in the Brazilian province of Rio Grande do Sul, gave him "some personal acquaintance with the subject". Cunninghame Graham further concedes that the war which raged between Paraguay and Brazil in the 1860s, *i.e.* shortly before he arrived on the scene, had unquestionably damaged many of the relevant sites and that therefore "the actual condition of the rich district of Misiones (Paraguay) at the time I visited it . . . does not enable me to speak with authority on the condition of communities, the guiding spirits of which were expelled as far back as the year 1767". On a more affirmative note, he reported that "the actual buildings of the missions, the churches in a dismantled state, have indeed survived" as had some of the palm trees which the Jesuits planted. Cunninghame Graham's observations of these abandoned sites evoke images of countless paintings of nineteenth-century Romanticism and, given his personality, probably influenced his perception of the past:

On every side the powerful vegetation had covered up the fields. On ruined church and chapel, and on broken tower, the lianas climbed as if on trees, creeping up the belfries, and throwing great masses of scarlet and purple flowers out of the apertures where once were hung the bells. In the thick jungles, a few half-wild cattle still were to be found.²⁹

Cunninghame Graham came very close to conceding that his first-hand observations of these sites and, for that matter, of Paraguay in general shed little light on the indigenous population. A few generations of continuing miscegenation and general Hispanification stood between the *mestizos* whom he observed in the 1870s and the Guaraní whom colonists and Jesuits had encountered during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. Cunninghame Graham's remarks about the rural population of Paraguay in the fourth quarter of the nineteenth century indicate that he realised fully that he was dealing with a vastly changed ethnic group.

Cunninghame Graham did not avail himself of the vast documentary resources of the Vatican Archives or make extensive use of the collections in other repositories (some of which, to be sure, were not accessible until the latter half of the twentieth century) and consequently had to rely to a considerable degree on the published accounts of earlier historians. To his credit, he did not approach that body of secondary material entirely uncritically. At the most rudimentary level, he understood that some existing histories of the Jesuit undertaking amongst the Guaraní and closely related matters were polemical attacks on the Society of Jesus while others were unabashedly apologetic. Despite his own lauding of this endeavour, Cunninghame Graham took to task the eighteenth-century Italian priest and historian, Lodovico Antonio Muratori (1672-1750), who is often regarded as the father of modern Italian historiography, partly because of his editing and publishing of massive compilations of historical documents. His *Il Cristianesimo Felice nelle Missioni dei Padri della Compagnia di Gesù nel Paraguai*³⁰ struck Cunninghame Graham as utterly naïve and unrealistic. "A very Carlo Dolce amongst writers, with him all in the missions is so cloying sweet that one's soul sickens, and one longs in his 'Happy Christianity' to find a drop of gall", he grouses. "For full five hundred pages nothing is amiss; the men of Belial persecute the Jesuit saints, who always (after the fashion of their Order and mankind) turn both cheeks to the smiter, and, if their purse is taken, hasten to give up their cloaks". Cunninghame Graham's mixing of New Testament metaphors does not cause him to break stride in his criticism of Muratori's work, which he also took to task for misrepresenting the Guaraní at the *reducciones* as a virtually Edenic tribe: "The Indians are all love and gratitude. No need in the Abbé's pages for the twelve pairs of fetters, which Brabo most unkindly has set down amongst his inventories". Furthermore, Muratori does not mention "a single

lapsus from the moral rule the Jesuits imposed - no drunkenness, and bigamy so seldom met with that it would seem that Joseph Andrews had been a swaggerer judged by the standard of these moral Guaranís".³¹

Moving to the opposite pole, as an example of unwarranted vilification Cunninghame Graham cites *L'Histoire du Paraguay sous les Jésuites* by Bernardo Ibañez de Echavarri, who had been expelled from the Society of Jesus, "for quite in Hogarth's vein, he paints the missions as a perpetual march to Finchley, and tells us that the Indians were savages, and quite unchanged in all their primitive propensities under the Jesuit rule". Continuing his critique of that vilifying work in a similarly caustic vein, he remarks that Ibañez "roundly says the Jesuits were loafers, accuses them of keeping the Indians ignorant for their own purposes, and paints them quite as black as the Abbé Muratori painted them rose colour, and with as little art". Cunninghame Graham found nothing surprising about this rampant tendentiousness, as "in the writings of all polemists, no matter upon which side they may write, there is but little information, and that distorted to an incredible degree, is all that they afford".³²

On a more sophisticated level of ideological confrontation, Cunninghame Graham crosses swords with the Spanish naturalist and geographer Félix de Azara (1746-1821), who is best remembered for his meticulously detailed studies of the fauna and flora of Paraguay made during more than a decade of observation there late in the eighteenth century. He was also a social commentator, however, and it was in the area of economics that Cunninghame Graham disagreed sharply with his perceptions of the Guaraní. Unfortunately, he fails to cite any of Azara's works explicitly, thereby leaving readers wondering about the context in which this biologist made his remarks. Cunninghame Graham grants that Azara was "an extremely able writer" whose length of time in Paraguay vastly exceeded his own. The fundamental difference between the two men was not empirical but ideological. "Educated as he was in the school of the Encyclopædists, amongst the strictest of the pharisees of Liberalism, to him the very name of Jesuit was anathema", judges the Scotsman, convinced that Azara's perception was captive to his upbringing and faith in free trade in the tradition of Adam Smith, with which he himself, as a moderate socialist, disagreed markedly. "After the fashion of his kind, he seemed unable to distinguish between the scheming Jesuits at European courts and the simple and hard-working

missionaries in Paraguay". Moreover, Azara seemed to be waging a vendetta against the Society of Jesus in which his powers of discernment were sacrificed on the altar of rhetorical combat:

All were anathema, and therefore all their system was repugnant to him: and though a kindly man, as is set forth abundantly in all his works, he never paused to think that there could be a difference between his ideal free Liberal citizen, voting and exercising all his right of citizenship in a free commonwealth, after the fashion of a dormouse air-pump, and a simple Indian of the Paraguayan woods.

Freedom to him, as it has been to many theoretists, was an abstract thing, possessing which a man, even though starving, must in its mere possession find true happiness.³³

Style

Cunninghame Graham's style is of only secondary relevance to this study, but certain aspects of his writing significantly affect the presentation of his material and therefore merit brief comment. As we have already observed, he has a strong penchant for sarcasm, often using it to belittle the positions of previous historians and other commentators rather than adducing solid evidence to disprove points at which he believes they are mistaken. Furthermore, we have seen instances of Cunninghame Graham's tendency to make what may be invalid inductive inferences, going far out on a limb with generalisations for which he fails to adduce adequate documentation, indeed, in case after case no proof at all. In accordance with this, his footnotes are sparse and *A Vanished Arcadia* lacks a bibliography. In what appears to be a conscious or unconscious attempt to compensate for the absence of these scientific apparati, Cunninghame Graham repeatedly quotes from Spanish, French, and other sources without bothering to translate them. His frequent use of Spanish texts in this regard is particularly ironic, because he explicitly laments that "to-day hardly any literature of Europe is so little studied in England" as that of Spain.³⁴

Cunninghame Graham's stylistic presentation of his case is generally straightforward and uncomplicated. *A Vanished Arcadia* is 294 pages in length after a preface of eight pages. It is divided into eleven chapters of greatly varying length, and it is not always clear why chapters end where they do. Preceding each chapter there is a topic-by-topic summary of its contents, a feature quite widespread in historical and travel books of the Victorian era. The same information is reproduced in the table of contents. The six-page index is fairly useful. Cunninghame Graham devotes a fair amount of space in the first three chapters to painting the backdrop before which the drama is played out. He describes *inter alia* the origins of the Society of Jesus, early Spanish explorations in central South America and the establishment of Spanish hegemony over that area, the development of early missionary endeavours in the region, and the life and actions of the quixotic Bishop Bernardino de Cardenas, who would become the first significant foe of the Jesuits in Paraguay. Having thus prepared the ground by developing this environment, Cunninghame Graham devotes several chapters to the establishment of the *reducciones*, their lay-out and administration, conflicts between the Jesuits and Spanish settlers in the region, and the sometimes tense relations between church and state in Spain's Latin American colonies. Dozens of pages relate to the challenges to the Jesuit missions which the changing borders between the Spanish colonies and Portuguese Brazil posed during the 1750s and how some of the *reducciones* were temporarily closed several years before the general expulsion of the Society of Jesus from Latin America in 1767. Cunninghame Graham gives a moderately detailed account of how Father Luis de Altamirano, himself a Jesuit, travelled to the New World in the early 1750s to investigate the *reducciones* and determine the future of these heavily criticised institutions, and to the several years of resistance to the policy, which Altamirano favoured, of rapidly closing those which had come under Portuguese colonial administration following the change of the border between Brazil and Paraguay according to the terms of the Treaty of Madrid of 1750. Curiously enough, Cunninghame Graham provides only a skeletal chronology to guide readers through the complexities of the history which he is relating. He seeks to justify this by asserting with characteristic sarcasm that "the setting down of dates in much profusion is, after all, an *ad captandum* appeal to the suffrages of those soft-headed

creatures who are styled serious men".³⁵ Unfortunately, in avoiding such "profusion", this author fails to give enough to serve readers adequately.

Stylistically *A Vanished Arcadia* is clearly the work of an unpolished writer. In addition to the foibles mentioned above, the text contains many instances of run-on sentences, ungrammatical English, confused syntax, and lengthy digressions into secondary matters which detract from the smooth flow of Cunninghame Graham's narrative. On several occasions he mentions but fails to explain crucial names and terms. One of the most glaring of these is a cryptic solitary reference to Sebastião José de Carvalho e Mello, the increasingly influential Portuguese politician who eventually effectively held the principal reins of power in Lisbon and waged an effective campaign against the Jesuits there in the middle of the eighteenth century. Cunninghame Graham merely refers to him as "Pombal" without identifying this crucial figure or explaining his devastating significance to the history of the Society of Jesus.³⁶

More seriously, he fails to deal adequately with such critical topics as missionary work as such or the generally unimpressive efforts to create an indigenous church amongst the Guaraní. Perhaps it did not occur to this socialist historian that the central task of the Jesuits was to proclaim the Gospel and establish indigenous churches. In any case, such religious matters are subordinated to political and economic ones in the perception of this agnostic. *A Vanished Arcadia* leaves no doubt about his principal interests and priorities. This general subjectivity and the resulting imbalance, as we shall see shortly, exercised a profound influence on Cunninghame Graham's handling of the Jesuit undertaking amongst the Guaraní and his use of it as a pulpit for the proclamation of his political and economic views. It is tempting to conclude that this author sorely needed but did not have a more demanding editor in London. That such a person could have improved countless weaknesses in the text of *A Vanished Arcadia* is probable, but the fact remains that Cunninghame Graham's intentions in writing this volume were such that mere proficient copy-editing would not have prevented him from producing something quite different from what many readers presumably expect from a serious venture in the history of missions.

Attitudes towards Indigenous Peoples and Colonists

At several points Cunninghame Graham tips his hand and reveals that he shared many of the ethnic prejudices which were common amongst Europeans and Britons in his day. The extent to which this prism of prejudice refracted objective historical truths (many of which in any case came to him second-hand through the written works of earlier commentators who themselves were by no means unbiased) is impossible to gauge. We can, however, examine briefly some of Cunninghame Graham's most telling remarks about the Guaraní and other indigenous peoples and surmise how they reflect his general perceptions about these ethnic groups. It will be apparent that what is at play are not only patronising and moderately disdainful attitudes towards the Guaraní and other indigenous peoples but, in the author's poorly articulated ideological framework a representation of these groups as both victims of European imperialism and people in dire need of the protection which one exceptional band of Europeans provided through the creation of ideal, non-competitive communities for them.

As early as the Preface, Cunninghame Graham demonstrates both his willingness to make incautious generalisations about indigenous American peoples and to do so in condescending terms. He remarks that the *reducciones* were "foredoomed to failure" and adds that "the Indians, too, have vanished, gone to that limbo which no doubt is fitted for them".³⁷ In his first chapter as well, Cunninghame Graham indicates that his attitude towards the "Indians" of the Americas is either condescending or, at least, fatalistic. His initial comment in this regard is made in connection with a defensive remark about the missionary undertaking in question. "It may be that all Indian races are destined to disappear if they come into contact with Europeans", he generalizes; "certainly, experience would seem to confirm the supposition".³⁸ Cunninghame Graham shared the Eurocentric understanding of civilisation common to the Victorians and their contemporaries in Europe and amongst Americans who traced their ancestry to that continent. With regard to the Guaraní, he asserts that "it is certain that they had attained to no very high degree of civilization, though they were certainly more advanced than their neighbours in the Gran Chaco [before the advent of the Jesuits]". The only immediately

relevant evidence Cunninghame Graham adduces in reaching this conclusion, however, is the assumption that “they had not a single stone-built town, or even a house” prior to that time. Continuing in the same vein, he declares that in Brazil “all efforts to civilize them have proved abortive, and to-day they still range the forests, attacking small parties of travellers, and burning isolated farm-houses”.³⁹ At the close of Chapter One, Cunninghame Graham describes the tribes to whom the Jesuits brought the Gospel as “restless as Arabs” and “suspicious above every race of men” but fails to indicate what has led him to make this judgment, which is presumably best regarded as an imprudent attempt at poetic adornment. In a corresponding rhetorical flourish, in the final paragraph of the book he notes that both “Indians and Jesuits are gone from Paraguay, the Indians to that Trapalanda which is their appointed place . . .”.⁴⁰

The native peoples also struck Cunninghame Graham as being simple-minded and essentially lethargic. He believes that “the greatest difficulty which the Jesuits had to face was the natural indolence of their neophytes”, *i.e.* Guaraní who had recently arrived at the *reducciones*.⁴¹ He relates how Antonio Ruiz de Montoya, one of the first Jesuit missionaries in Paraguay, and his colleagues sought to evangelise the “wild Caaguas” of Guayrá in the 1630s. These people “they strove hard to civilize” by bringing them to a *reducción*, but their efforts bore very little fruit. Attempts to impart some understanding of Christianity similarly had mixed results. “It may be that the Caaguas, not having much to occupy their minds, approached the mysteries of our faith in more receptive attitudes than is attained by those whose minds are full”, Cunninghame Graham writes with unveiled condescension.⁴² In a similar vein, he refers to “the doglike patience of the Indians”.⁴³ There is at one point of his text the rudiments of a hierarchy of ethnic groups. As indicated earlier, Cunninghame Graham cared little for religious doctrines, whereas his socialist proclivities influenced him strongly in the direction of social ethics. Perhaps this allowed him to look more favourably upon the Guaraní as such than otherwise might have been the case. “As a general rule, the Indian (unlike the negro) cares little for dogma”, he states with his characteristic penchant for exaggerated generalisation, “but places his belief entirely in good works”.⁴⁴

However low Cunninghame Graham’s estimate of the Guaraní and other tribes in their natural state may have been, he saved his most vitriolic racist

indictments for some of their neighbours across the border in Brazil. He castigated the Portuguese and other European settlers there for interbreeding with indigenous inhabitants. This “engaging population, being in want of wives whereby to propagate their virtues”, Cunninghame Graham remarks sarcastically, sought out the sexual favours of both indigenes and Africans “and bred a race worse ten times than themselves, as often happens both in the case of Mulattos and Mestizos in America”. These “Mamelucos” became “the terror of the land”.⁴⁵ His censorious attitude towards interracial procreation may help to explain his defence of the Jesuit policy of keeping the indigenous peoples at their *reducciones* isolated from Spanish colonists, although in subsequent chapters he bases this chiefly on economic arguments, not those of either physical or cultural anthropology.

Cunninghame Graham also proved himself capable of castigating the Spanish colonial population in sarcastic and condescending terms, often extending himself beyond the defensible perimeter of whatever evidence he has but rarely cites. His written sources, however, presumably were less helpful in providing general characteristics of these settlers, forcing him to use his imagination to a greater extent. Consequently, Cunninghame Graham wrote less about them as a group than he did about the Guaraní, although he commented at length on a relatively small number of Spanish colonists. It is with the latter that we shall concern ourselves briefly.

In all instances when Cunninghame Graham describes Spanish-Americans collectively, they are either villainous or otherwise negatively portrayed. This, of course, harmonises with his anti-imperialist ideology which governs much of the framework of *A Vanished Arcadia*. Occasionally animal metaphors stand for the settlers. Predictably, his harshest words are applied to those colonists most directly involved in economic exploitation. Two examples will illustrate this. “In Mexico the curious class of miners known as *gambusinos* rove through the valleys of the Sierra Madre armed with pick and pan, passing their lives in hunting mines, as pigs hunt truffles”, Cunninghame Graham writes graphically. “If they come upon a mine, they never try to work it, but sell the secret for a trifling sum, and, drinking out the money, start on again to find the mines worked by the Aztecs, till an Apache bullet or arrow stops them, their El Dorado still ahead, or they are found beside their pick and shovel dead of thirst”.⁴⁶ Elsewhere, he refers to the Jesuit experiment in creating isolated communities of converts as attempts “to seclude them from

the contamination of the scum of Europe” and, as a rhetorical foil to the Jesuits, refers sarcastically to Europeans who by contrast employ indigenes in colonial exploitation as the “least fitted of our population”.⁴⁷

Attitude towards the Jesuits and the *Reducciones*

Cunninghame Graham professes, probably disingenuously, in his Preface that he cannot delve into “the whole question of the Jesuits . . . as it entails command of far more foot and half-foot words than I can muster up”.⁴⁸ One suspects that his supposed inability either reflects the difficulty of finding appropriate and reliable source material, for it was widely known in literary circles at that time that most of the histories and other published accounts of the Society of Jesus were either polemical or defensive rather than objective and trustworthy. No less significantly, Cunninghame Graham had little interest in religious issues as such. As we shall see, he is concerned with economic and political matters, not theological or other spiritual ones.

Nevertheless, in his Preface Cunninghame Graham gives rudiments of a partial contradiction of this disavowal of an attempt to comment on “the whole question of the Jesuits”. Indeed, on the same page he praises these religious men for the benefits they brought to the Guaraní, and two pages later he notes flatly that “none of the Jesuits were ever tried; no crimes were charged against them; [and] even the reasons for their expulsion were never given to the world at large”.⁴⁹

It should not be assumed, however, that Cunninghame Graham was favourably disposed towards these Jesuits and other missionaries in any categorical sense. In Chapter One he adopts an unambiguously anti-missionary tone by asserting without explanation that “missionaries and conquerors are men, on the whole, more imbued with their own importance and sanctity, and less disposed to consider consequences, than almost any other classes of mankind”.⁵⁰ On what evidence, if any, this judgment rests is not apparent. More significantly, Cunninghame Graham does not integrate it into his history of the *reducciones* by applying it to the men of the Society of Jesus. His indictment is little more than a loose thread lying diagonally across the warp and woof of his narrative. Furthermore, in this respect he is utterly inconsistent.

In the same chapter Cunninghame Graham declares that “from Japan to the interior of Bolivia there is scarcely a country in which the Jesuits have not laboured assiduously, and in which they have not shed their blood freely without hope of reward” and takes to task previous writers who he believes have unjustly written negatively about the Society of Jesus in general.⁵¹

Cunninghame Graham leaves no doubt that he regards the *reducciones* as essentially successful in themselves and that if it had not been for rapacious economic interests of imperialist powers in Europe and the exploitative greed of Spanish and Portuguese settlers in South America these communities would have continued to thrive. Again, however, he ignores the fact that the chief factor which motivated their establishment was religious and that they were part of a larger missionary movement whose principal aim was the continuing proclamation of the Gospel through the creation of indigenous churches. Cunninghame Graham comes very close to understanding that despite the economic benefits they brought to the Guaraní, in a crucial sense the Jesuits who established and maintained the *reducciones* were a partial failure when assayed with this inescapably religious touchstone. With regard to the termination of the Jesuit presence in the 1760s, he emphasises succinctly in the Preface: “Certain it is that but a few years after their final exit from the missions between the Uruguay and Paraná, all was confusion. In twenty years most of the missions were deserted, and before thirty years had passed, no vestige of their old prosperity remained”.⁵² In other words, despite a century and a half of concentrated effort amongst the Guaraní, the Jesuits had failed to create a viable indigenous church which could survive without missionary support and supervision. This fact in itself is arguably telling evidence against the supposed success of the enterprise.

Cunninghame Graham’s Contemporary Rhetorical Use of the *Reducciones*

Like many previous and subsequent historians of and commentators on the Jesuit missionary endeavour amongst the Guaraní, Cunninghame Graham employed it as an historic example in thinly veiled arguments about contemporary issues. In brief, in *A Vanished Arcadia* it serves him in his crusade against imperialism

and free trade, both of which had been hotly debated issues in British politics for many years before the publication of this book. We shall examine briefly several of Cunninghame Graham's explicit and implicit uses of this missionary undertaking as a rhetorical device.

This use of the Jesuit missions as an historical parallel is foreshadowed in Chapter One. Cunninghame Graham draws an explicit parallel between the Iberian conquest of what became Latin America and the late nineteenth-century "scramble for Africa" but points out what he regards as two significant differences between these two broad episodes of imperialism and in doing so reveals his captivity to the axiology of contemporary racist attitudes:

What Africa has been for the last twenty years, Spanish America was three hundred years ago, the difference being that, whereas modern adventure in Africa goes on under full observation, and deals in the main with absolutely uncivilized peoples, the conquest of South America was invested with all the charm of novelty, and brought the conquerors into contact with at least two peoples almost as advanced in most of the arts of civilization as they were themselves.⁵³

Some of Cunninghame Graham's examples of abuse by contemporary imperialists are oblique and draw upon the Spanish conquest of Latin America generally rather than the Jesuit experience there. The first of these occurs in Chapter One. He discusses the revered Bartolomé de Las Casas who, he notes, made no fewer than seven voyages from Latin America to Spain, ostensibly to present his case for the protection of the aboriginal peoples against the *conquistadores*. Cunninghame Graham quotes from Las Casas' dedication of his treatise on abuse: "Que no permita (Felipe II.) las atrocidades que los tiranos inventaron, y que prosiguen haciendo con titulo de 'conquistas.' Los que se jactan de ser 'conquistadores' a que descenden de ellos son mucho mas orgullosos arrogantes y vanos que los otros Españoles". He comments explicitly about the reproduction of such mistreatment in his own day: "Strange that even to-day the same *atrocidades of tiranos* are going on in Africa". Why this should be "strange", however, and what the imperialist atrocities are on that continent, Cunninghame Graham does not specify. Furthermore,

as a gratuitous and unsubstantiated parting shot he asserts that “no doubt the descendants of these ‘conquerors’ will be as arrogant, proud, and vain as the descendants of the *conquistadores* of whom Las Casas writes”.⁵⁴

In a closely related passage later in the same chapter, Cunninghame Graham describes how Domingo Martinez de Irala, one of the first *conquistadores* in Paraguay, reportedly slew seven Guaraní with his own hands. In a footnote, Cunninghame Graham remarks cryptically that “few modern ‘conquerors’ in Africa seem to have engaged in personal combat with the natives”, adding that “times change, though not always for the bettering of things”.⁵⁵ Presumably, he is implying that even though leaders of contemporary imperialism, especially those involved in the “scramble for Africa”, did their dirty work indirectly through subalterns rather than brandishing arms themselves, international exploitation of less technically advanced peoples differed little at the turn of the twentieth century from that 300 or 400 years earlier.

In another jab at European imperialism in Africa, Cunninghame Graham compares the relative acceptability of the Jesuits amongst the Guaraní, as opposed to the hostility of the latter to Spanish colonists, to what he assumes is that of settlers from continental Europe as opposed to the British conquerors of Rhodesia. “As in the same way that in Matabeleland, perhaps, a German, Frenchman, or Italian is less hateful to the natives than an Englishman, so in Paraguay the Indians liked the Jesuits better than the other Orders, for there were many foreigners amongst their ranks”.⁵⁶ On what evidence this comparison of the Society of Jesus with other Roman Catholic religious organisations simultaneously active in Paraguay rests is unclear. The Jesuits, after all, were not the only missionary order which encompassed non-Spanish members, and Cunninghame Graham’s analogy begs the question as to whether the Guaraní cared about or even understood the distinction between a Spanish priest and, say, an Italian colleague. But these issues are secondary; the essential thrust of this paragraph of his narrative is that the conquest of Matabeleland which Cecil John Rhodes undertook as part of his grand scheme of helping the British Empire to span the African continent from “Cape to Cairo” was an unwelcome intrusion into the sovereign territory of another people.

In one of his other lessons, the schoolmaster Cunninghame Graham seeks to combine economics and cultural anthropology. Keenly aware of the antagonism

of many Europeans in South America both past and present to the indigenous population of that continent, he attributes this in part to a resentment of the supposedly clannish unity of the latter. "There is, as it would seem, implanted in the minds of almost all primitive peoples, such as the Guaranís, a solidarity, a clinging kinship, which if once broken down by competition, unrestrained after our modern fashion, inevitably leads to their decay", theorises Cunninghame Graham. More recent examples of this seem to abound: "Hence the keen hatred to the Chinese in California and in Australia". To what extent this is another manifestation of his conformity to the European racism and pseudoanthropology of his day is not readily discernible. In any case, it was self-evident to him that when uprooted from their traditional homelands, peoples who had fallen victim to imperialism underwent a cultural decline while continuing to pose some kind of unarticulated threat to those who oppressed them. This, in turn, contributes to the rhetoric of racism: "Naturally, those whom we hate, and in a measure fear, we also vilify, and this has given rise to all those accusations of Oriental vice (as if the vice of any Oriental, however much depraved, was comparable to that of citizens of Paris or of London), of barbarism, and the like, so freely levelled against the unfortunate Chinese".⁵⁷

In his concluding chapter, Cunninghame Graham lampoons the European tendency to create empires in the name of religion and through an idolatrous understanding of history. "The self-created goddess Progress was justified by works, and all the land left barren, waiting the time when factories shall pollute its sky", he writes sarcastically of the Victorian era, "and render miserable the European emigrants, who, flying from their slavery at home, shall have found it waiting for them in their new paradise beyond the seas". The people of Europe have been quick to invoke divine blessings on their own selfishness and greed with regard to the technically less advanced inhabitants of other continents, and to declare that they are God's instruments in history. In so doing, they have recreated God in their own cynical image:

The world, it would appear, is a vast class-room, and its Creator but a professor of political economy, apparently unable to carry out his theories with effect. Therefore, to us, the Western Europeans, he has turned for help, and upon us devolved the task of extirpating

all those peoples upon whom he tried his 'prentice hand. On us he laid injunctions to increase at home, and to the happier portions of the world to carry death under the guise of life unsuitable to those into whose lands we spread.

To self-righteous Victorians who believed they were altruistic bearers of indispensable civilisation to the world, Cunninghame Graham thunders a jeremiad, calling the transplantation of British governance and culture overseas without due regard for the autonomy and welfare of indigenous peoples “a crime posterity with execration will one day taunt us with, and hold us up to scorn, as we to-day in our hypocrisy piously curse the memories of Pizarro and Cortés”. He finds European imperialism entirely indefensible and ultimately little more than genocide. “It has been nobly said ‘that the extinction of the smallest animal is a far greater loss than if the works of all the Greeks had perished’”, he writes, quoting from Hudson’s *Naturalist in La Plata*. “How much the greater loss, that of a type of man such as the Indians, whom the semi-communistic Jesuit government successfully preserved, sheltering them from the death-dealing breath of our cold northern life and its full, fell effects!”⁵⁸

Cunninghame Graham also extracts lessons from early Jesuit history other than those directly illustrative of the timeless evils of imperialism. He appears to have been disillusioned by the lack of rationality and fairness in both political and ecclesiastical promotions in Britain. Whether this reflected his own exclusion from “old boy” networks of public school alumni and former students at Oxford and Cambridge is impossible to ascertain. In any case, he twice uses the case of the Spanish Jesuit Antonio Ruiz de Montoya, who was one of the first members of the Society to enter Paraguay, to exemplify what he believes was a universal truth in this regard. Cunninghame Graham relates how Montoya described the horse on which Father Roque, another early pioneer in this endeavour, had ridden, and how it had refused to bear any other rider after the death of that priest. Cunninghame Graham does not appear to have accepted this almost hagiographic account literally, but he nevertheless writes of Montoya that he was “well skilled in knowledge of studies in science” and “his superiors stood in some little awe of him, as those in office often do of their subordinates when they show that capacity for action

which is a sure bar to advancement either in Church or State". Subsequently Cunninghame Graham recounts Montoya's conflicts with Spanish settlers and concludes that "no matter whether a man make his career with Indians in the wilds of Paraguay or amongst the so-called reasoning people in more sophisticated lands, if he once show himself superior to the ordinary run of men, there is something of an invidious character certain to be attributed to him by those who think that genius is the worst attribute that man can have".⁵⁹ Cunninghame Graham concludes his relatively lengthy section on Montoya by thrusting an acerbic rhetorical weapon at privileged but unnamed traditional historians who, quite unlike himself, have often burnished the image of figures who have wielded power and gained prominence, in contrast to the supporters of Labour who sent him to Parliament. His resentment of the pervasive British social class system and the restrictions it imposed on most subjects of the Crown is again transparent: "Most commonly the world forgets or never knows its greatest men, while its lard-headed fools, who in their lives perhaps have been the toys of fortune, sleep in their honoured graves, their memory living in the page of history, preserved like grapes in aspic by writers suet-headed as themselves".⁶⁰

Cunninghame Graham cannot resist drawing on his extensive experience in Latin America to call attention to what he clearly regards as irresponsible Spanish exploitation of the area's natural resources, a trait which he apparently believes has been passed down to the descendants of the original settlers and manifests itself in schemes to deceive the unwary. "Even to-day, in almost every mining town, a mysterious, poverty-stricken man sometimes approaches you with great precaution, and, drawing from his pocket an object wrapped in greasy paper, declares with oaths that it is *rosicler* (red silver ore), and that he knows where there are tons and tons of it", he reports.⁶¹

It is in Chapter Six of *A Vanished Arcadia*, in which he describes *inter alia* social and economic aspects of the communities themselves, and in his relatively brief concluding chapter, that Cunninghame Graham most explicitly and in greatest detail seeks to apply the lessons of the Jesuit *reducciones* and their demise to contemporary British and world politics and economics. Nowhere in this volume does he more flatly, if unwittingly, contradict his prefatory assertion that he is not concerned with "the political aspect" of the Jesuit commonwealth amongst the Guaraní. This is not to suggest that Cunninghame Graham's interest is solely to hammer an anti-

imperialist and anti-capitalist message into the minds of capitalist readers at the height of the British Empire. There is sufficient reason to believe that the history of the *reducciones* themselves appealed strongly to the romantic side of his personality, as it had to many previous writers and as it would to countless subsequent ones as well as cinema-goers in the late 1980s. The point, which Cunninghame Graham made no effort to conceal, is that this historical episode is of much more than antiquarian interest, that it on the one hand could instruct Britons who might sympathise with the Jesuits and the Guaraní while actually contributing to the oppression of African and Asian peoples in roughly analogous situations at the beginning of the twentieth century, and on the other hand provide evidence that at least in some situations what he calls a “semi-communistic” economic model could contribute to the welfare of people who are not in a position to compete effectively in the aggressive world of international free trade.

Before summarising Cunninghame Graham’s depiction of social and economic conditions at the *reducciones*, it is helpful to consider briefly how the leaders of the Labour movement in which he had been deeply involved perceived the lives of the working class in Britain in the late Victorian period. Perhaps nowhere is this more succinctly presented than in an editorial which Hardie wrote in his periodical *Labour Leader* in July 1889, *i.e.* some eleven months after he, Cunninghame Graham, and others had constituted the Scottish Labour Party. He used miners as “typical of every other class of workers” in the country in a dismal portrayal of living and working conditions:

Their hours of labour in Scotland range from 9 to 12 [daily]; they can earn on an average all the year round 15/- a week; they live in houses of a single apartment, where the commonest decencies of civilised life are impossible; they live on fare of the least nutritious kind; they work in an atmosphere that kills them off at 45 years of age; their wives bear them families ranging from seven to fourteen children; they pay heavy royalties to landlords for leave to dig coal; they transform poor men who become mineowners, into millionaires in the course of one lifetime; the intelligent men among them who attempt to form a Trades Union, appoint a check-weighman (as

provided by law), or go on a deputation to seek better wages, are ruthlessly dismissed and starved into acquiescence with things as they are; the proud are tamed, the high-spirited broken; their clergy are selected for them by their employers, and have to preach the gospel of submission to masters; petty tyrants are placed over them to report to headquarters any act of disobedience, that it may be duly punished; the drunken and the improvident are favoured, and the thrifty and self-respecting are punished. The men have neither voice nor lot in the management of their own affairs, but have to be content in all things to do exactly as the manager wishes them. The manager is appointed by the employers, and paid by them to work the pits cheaply. He cannot help himself, and he must either screw the men down, or make room for some one who will.

To any reader who believed that Hardie was exaggerating the tribulation of the British working class, he insisted that “such is a very much understated picture of the freedom of the miner in this year of grace 1889”.⁶²

In the limited twentieth-century historiography of Jesuit missions in Paraguay, the question of how capitalist or socialist these communities were during a mercantilist age has been the subject of debate. The socialist Labourite Cunninghame Graham leaves no doubt as to where he stands on this issue, and it is clearly a mixed position. He argues that “the Jesuits anticipated Socialism - at least, so far as that they bought and sold for use, and not for gain”. Immediately, however, Cunninghame Graham qualifies this by emphasising that while they conducted the domestic policies of the *reducciones* along generally collectivist lines, “in their dealings with the outside world the Jesuits adhered to what are known as ‘business principles’”. Rather than defining the latter in detail, he again resorts to sarcasm and implicitly commits himself to what would become known as the Weber thesis of the religious foundation of modern capitalism by declaring that “these principles, if I mistake not, have been deified by politicians with their ‘Buy in the cheapest, sell in the dearest’ tag, and therefore even the sternest Protestant or Jansenist (if such there still exist) can have no stone to throw at the Company of Jesus for its participation in that system which has made the whole world glad”.⁶³

Within this double framework, Cunninghame Graham attaches primary importance to the domestic scene. He describes the ownership of property and distribution of profits at the *reducciones* in almost exclusively positive terms. Most of the system, Cunninghame Graham emphasises, was not only collectivist but also humane and profitable:

All the *estancias*, the agricultural lands and workshops were, so to speak, the property of the community; that is to say, the community worked them in common, was fed and maintained by their productions, the whole under the direction of the two Jesuits who lived in every town. A portion called *tupinambal* in Guaraní was set aside especially for the maintenance of orphans and of widows. The cattle and the horses, with the exception of 'los caballos del santo,' destined for show at feasts, were also used in common. The surplus of the capital was reserved to purchase necessary commodities from Buenos Ayres [*sic*] and from Spain. Each family received from the common stock sufficient for its maintenance during good conduct, for the Jesuits held in its entirety the Pauline dictum that if a man will not work, then neither shall he eat.⁶⁴

Cunninghame Graham freely admits that there was also private property at the *reducciones*, but he does not specify the extent of it, and in any case he subordinates it to the communal dimension of the economy. "Certain of the Indians owned their own cows and horses, and had gardens in which they worked; but all the product was obliged to be disposed of to the Jesuits for the common good, and in exchange for them they gave knives, scissors, cloth, and looking-glasses, and other articles made in the outside world".⁶⁵

Notwithstanding the place of purchased merchandise of this type, to a very great extent Cunninghame Graham describes the *reducciones* as comfortably self-sufficient economic units in which basic needs were easily met. "Clothes were served out to every Indian, and consisted for the men of trousers, coarse *ponchos*, straw hats or caps, and shirts; but neither men nor women ever wore shoes, and the sole costume of the latter was the Guaraní *tipoi*, a long and sleeveless shift cut rather

high, and with coarse embroidery round the shoulders, and made of a rough cotton cloth", he explains. Food flowed from a modest *cornucopia*, as animal husbandry ensured an adequate supply of meat, and "vegetables each family was obliged to plant in their gardens and in the common fields; and all that were not actually consumed were dealt out to the workers in the common workshops or preserved for sale". Cunninghame Graham summarises the success of this collective scheme: "Thus food and clothing cost the Jesuits (or the community) but little, and a rude plenty was the order of the land. . . . This, then, was the system by means of which the Jesuits succeeded, without employing force of any kind, which in their case would have been quite impossible, last as they were amongst the crowd of Indians, in making the Guaranís endure the yoke of toil".⁶⁶ Life in the *reducciones*, at least as refracted through the prism of Cunninghame Graham's socialist mindset, was almost diametrically opposed to the misery which British miners had endured in Hardie's *Labour Leader*.

Lurking behind Cunninghame Graham's salutary depiction of the social and economic structure of the *reducciones*, though never brought to the forefront by explicit mention of the matter, is his position on the general late Victorian confrontation of socialist collectivism and the individualism of the Liberal tradition. During Cunninghame Graham's early career in politics individualism meant many things in Britain, few of which he or most other Labourites could endorse. It referred on the one hand to a respect for personal morality, frugality, and self-help; people with these and closely related characteristics could be expected to make individual progress in their status. On a broader scale, however, individualism encompassed a commitment to the concept of limited government and, concomitantly, trust in the individual's ability to conduct his affairs in a rational and responsible manner. Inescapably, this implied a goal of attaining the greatest individual freedom that was compatible with the general public welfare. Within the economic sphere, the acknowledged self-interest of individuals was believed to promote the efficient distribution of resources within a society. That much of this ran counter to the social vision of men like Hardie and Cunninghame Graham is too obvious to require argumentation here. They had seen decades of such individualism and found little to praise about its results in Victorian Britain, which seemed to feature an inordinately disproportionate measure of resources in the hands of the few and, consequently,

widespread suffering on the part of the relatively deprived. To be sure, by the end of the nineteenth century some Liberals were softening their commitment to this underlying principle and moving in the direction of advocating a greater rôle on the part of the state in promoting the common good. To socialist Labourites, however, the path of collectivism seemed more rational and, in the long term, more beneficial to the public in general than compromises by one wing of the post-Gladstonian Liberal Party.

Intimately related to Cunninghame Graham's praise of the collectivist economy at the *reducciones* is his conviction that their relative isolation within the global economy allowed them to flourish. This belief, of course, clashed with the Liberal commitment to free trade. Cunninghame Graham believes that the ultimate history of the *reducciones* could be the final rhetorical nail in the coffin of that Victorian tenet. He summarises this in his concluding chapter: "The simple, ceremonious, if perhaps futile, mission-life had withered up at the first touch of vivifying competition - that competition which has made the whole world gray, reducing everything and everyone, to the most base and commonest denominator".⁶⁷

To a man with Cunninghame Graham's literary interests, it unquestionably seemed relevant that while it was allowed to exist this auspicious economic structure in South America provided a stable *Unterbau* for supporting creativity in the arts. His written sources told him little about what the Guaraní under Jesuit supervision actually created in music or visual arts. For that matter, there is little evidence of artistic novelty at the *reducciones* but ample testimony to the transfer of, for example, Baroque forms to Paraguay, where the indigenous population proved quite capable of imitation. Cunninghame Graham happily relates how the Guaraní marched to the fields singing hymns with musical accompaniment. "A pleasing and Arcadian style of tillage, and different from the system of the 'swinked' labourer in more northern climes", he remarks.⁶⁸ Once again Cunninghame Graham yields to the temptation to relate this ideal historical model to contemporary British imperialism, this time alluding to the recent conquest of Matabeleland. "Imagine a semi-communistic settlement set close to the borders of Rhodesia, in which thousands of Kaffirs passed a life analogous to that passed by the Indians of the missions", he challenges readers, "cared for and fed by the community, looked after in every smallest

particular of their lives - and what a flood of calumny would be let loose upon the unfortunate devisers of the scheme!"⁶⁹

Cunninghame Graham writes little about liturgical matters, but at worship too his Guaraní enjoy abundant cultural privileges. He recounts, however, that according to one historic description "Mass was celebrated with a full band, the oboe, fagot, lute, harp, cornet, clarinet, violin, viola, and all other kinds of music, figuring in the inventories of the thirty towns". The mood of joy did not end with the *Ite, missa est*: "Mass over, the procession was reconstituted outside the church, and after parading once more through the town broke up, when the Indians devoted the night to feasting, and not infrequently danced till break of day". Cunninghame Graham explicitly attributes this festive use of culture to the Jesuits and distinguishes their system from its contemporary alternatives:

Such were the outward arts with which the Jesuits sought to attach the simple people, to whom they stood in the position not only of pastors and masters both in one, but also as protectors from the Paulistas on one side, and on the other from the Spaniards of the settlements, who, with their *encomiendas* and their European system of free competition between man and man, were perhaps unknowingly the direst enemies of the whole Indian race.⁷⁰

Cunninghame Graham's conclusions are just as enlightening in terms of what he ignores as either of secondary importance or simply of little interest to him personally. Believing that an approximation of paradise could be realised on earth, this agnostic had little use for purely spiritual matters, especially those which did not directly contribute to what he termed the "happiness" of the Guaraní. He comes very close to declaring that success in effecting conversions is of no consequence in missionary endeavours. "Whether a missionary, Jesuit, or Jansenist, Protestant, Catholic, or Mohammedan, does well in forcing his own mode of life and faith on those who live a happier, freer life than any his instructor can hold out to them is a moot point", Cunninghame Graham insists, adding that only in retrospect can one determine whether an undertaking of this sort has been fruitful in terms of worldly benefits.⁷¹ This must be read in the context of his general bias

against religious institutions, apart from those which he perceived as serving secular well-being. Again and again in *A Vanished Arcadia* Cunninghame Graham discloses both his general aversion to religion and an ignorance of Christianity unbecoming one who has taken it upon himself to write a volume in the field of missions history. Alluding to the account of Cain slaying Abel in Genesis 4 after the Lord disregards the offering of the former while favouring that of the latter, for example, he notes that “the first blood ever spilt on earth was on account of a religious difference”.⁷² Cunninghame Graham also ridicules the sacrament of baptism, sarcastically stating that “faith is a wondrous thing, and able to move most things, even common-sense”.⁷³ Caricatures of religious practice in the New World flaw his text. In one crass oversimplification, he declares that “the influence of the vast plains and forests, and the great distances to travel, have introduced the system of camp meetings amongst the Protestants, whereas the Catholics have often held a sort of ambulatory mission, the people of one village following the preacher to the next . . .”.⁷⁴

Given these and many other gaffes in *A Vanished Arcadia*, one cannot assume that Cunninghame Graham was in a position to comment decisively on the rôle of religious factors in either stimulating or impeding the economic success of the *reducciones* or, for that matter, *vice versa*. What is nevertheless striking is how he apparently failed to overlook the fact that the Jesuits who participated in this undertaking for approximately a century and a half did not develop indigenous leadership of either the local church or government to give the *reducciones* a chance of surviving after the expulsion of the Society of Jesus from Spanish America in 1767. To Cunninghame Graham, the answer for the prompt decline of the Guaraní communities in the wake of that development lay simply in the fact that they were exposed to economic competition. Such facile reasoning, it would seem, sacrifices historical complexity on the altar of socialist Labourite criticism of free trade. Instead of taking the Jesuits to task for exercising clerical paternalism generation after generation, he looks back nostalgically to an era when “those Guaranís [were] gathered together in the missions, ruled over by their priests, treated like grown-up children, yet with a kindness which attached them to their rulers, enjoyed a half-Arcadian, half-monastic life, reaching to just so much of what the world calls civilization as they could profit by and use with pleasure to themselves”.⁷⁵ By placing, perhaps unwittingly, his *imprimatur* on this form of benevolent religious imperialism,

Cunninghame Graham was less liberated from the spirit of mainstream Victorian political thought and foreign policy than he imagined himself to be.

Notes

1. R.B. Cunninghame Graham, *A Vanished Arcadia* (London: W. Heinemann, 1901), xxiv.
2. R.B. Cunninghame Graham, *A Vanished Arcadia* (London: Century Hutchinson, 1988).
3. A.F. Tschiffely, *Don Roberto. Being the Accountn of the Life and Works of R.B. Cunninghame Graham* (London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1937).
4. Lloyd Wendell Eshleemann, *A Victorian Rebel: The Life of William Morris* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940), pp. 313, 345.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 345-346. See also Peter Faulkner, *Against the Age: The Life of William Morris* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1980), pp. 176-177.
6. "Obituary. Mr. Cunninghame Graham. A Scottish Hidalgo", *The Times* (London), 23 March 1936, p. 18.
7. "Mr. Disraeli at Sydenham", *The Times*, 2 June 1872, pp. 7-8.
8. Corelli Barnett, *The Collapse of British Power* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1972), pp. 27-28.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 23-43.
10. Michael Bentley, *The Climax of Liberal Politics: British Liberalism in Theory and Practice, 1868-1918* (London: Edward Arnold, 1987), p. 90.
11. J.A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1902).
12. Quoted in Iain McLean, *Keir Hardie* (London: Allen Lane, 1975), p. 129.
13. "Free trade", in John Bright and James E. Thorold Rogers (eds.), *Speeches on questions of public policy by Richard Cobden, M.P.*, 3rd ed. (London: Fisher Unwin, 1908), vol. I, pp. 62-63.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
15. Quoted in Robert Eccleshall (ed.), *British Liberalism: Liberal Thought from the 1640s to 1980s* (London: Longman, 1986), pp. 135-136.
16. Barnett, *The Collapse of British Power*, p. 50.
17. Quoted in Emrys Hughes (ed.), *Keir Hardie's Speeches and Writings* (Glawgow: "Forward" Printing and Publishing Company Ltd., n.d.), p. 12.
18. "Police Charges", *The Times*, 15 November 1887, p. 10.

19. "The Trafalgar-Square Riots", *The Times*, 15 November 1887, p. 10.
20. "Release of Mr. Graham, M.P., and Mr. Burns", *The Times*, 20 February 1888, pp. 3-4.
21. H.M. Tomlinson, "Graham, Robert Bontine Cunninghame", in L.G. Wickham Legg (ed.), *The Dictionary of National Biography, 1931-1940* (London: Oxford University Press, 1949), p. 35.
22. Untitled article summarising proceedings in the House of Commons on 1 December 1888, *The Times* (London), 3 December 1888, p. 10.
23. "Expulsion of Mr. Cunninghame Graham, M.P., from France", *The Times*, 12 May 1891, p. 5.
24. Tomlinson, "Graham, Robert Bontine Cunninghame", pp. 354-356.
25. "Obituary. Mr. Cunninghame Graham. A Scottish Hidalgo".
26. Cunninghame Graham, *A Vanished Arcadia*, xix-xx.
27. *Ibid.*, xx.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
29. *Ibid.*, pp. 7-9.
30. Two volumes, Torino and Venezia, 1743, 1749.
31. Cunninghame Graham, *A Vanished Arcadia*, pp. 196-197.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 176.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 283.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
35. *Ibid.*, xxiv.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
37. *Ibid.*, xxiii.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
39. *Ibid.*, pp. 26-28.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 288.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 177.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 72.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 78.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 150.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 55.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 105.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 180.
48. *Ibid.*, xix.
49. *Ibid.*, xix, xxi.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
52. *Ibid.*, xxi.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 6. The "two peoples" to whom Cunninghame Graham refers are presumably the Aztecs of what became Mexico and the Incas of what became Peru.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
55. *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 124.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 188.
58. *Ibid.*, pp. 286-287.
59. *Ibid.*, pp. 66, 68.
60. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
61. *Ibid.*, p. 105.
62. Quoted in Hughes (ed.), *Keir Hardie's Speeches and Writings*, p. 17.
63. Cunninghame Graham, *A Vanished Arcadia*, pp. 193-194.
64. *Ibid.*, p. 181.
65. *Ibid.*, p. 182.
66. *Ibid.*, pp. 182-183.
67. *Ibid.*, p. 286.
68. *Ibid.*, p. 179.

69. *Ibid.*, pp. 179-180.
70. *Ibid.*, pp. 187-188.
71. *Ibid.*, p. 178.
72. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
73. *Ibid.*, p. 72.
74. *Ibid.*, pp. 104-105.
75. *Ibid.*, xxiii.

CHAPTER FIVE

HOCHWÄLDER'S DRAMATISATION: A PLEA FOR RELIGIOUS TOLERATION AND MORAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Introduction

Having considered works by Voltaire and Cunninghame Graham, we now turn to our third and final major literary figure who, in the terms of our hypothesis, employed the history, especially the closure, of Jesuit missions to the Guaraní as evidence to support contemporary causes. The case of Fritz Hochwälder adds a particularly significant dimension to the testing of this hypothesis because unlike the two previously analysed *littérateurs*, he did not emerge from even a nominally Christian family, although as a Viennese Jew he unquestionably had considerable exposure to Roman Catholicism in a country where the ties between that ecclesiastical tradition and the state had been strong for centuries. No less importantly, this author wrote in response to direct ethnic and religious oppression and may therefore have believed he could empathise, if only by analogy, with the Guaraní to some extent.

Hochwälder's work is also significant to our study of *The Mission* because it forms part of that film's literary pedigree. A critical segment of the inspiration for Robert Bolt's screenplay of *The Mission* appears to have come from a tragedy originally written in German but translated into French and from that language into English. In its original, unpublished version this eventually internationally acclaimed drama was *Die Jesuiten in Paraguay*, which Hochwälder wrote during the Second World War, although at an early stage he modified it significantly and retitled the work *Das heilige Experiment*. It is under this title that it was performed in many theatres in the German-language countries and published in German. In France the adaptation by Jean Mercure and Richard Thieberger was titled *Sur la terre comme au ciel*. The English rendering of this Francophone version was staged and published chiefly under the title *The Strong Are Lonely*, although it also appeared on the stage as *Crown Colony*.

Thematically and attitudinally, the parallels between Hochwälder's first widely heralded drama for the stage and Bolt's for the screen are numerous and apparent.

The principal historical theme which provides the background for each piece is the forced closure of the Jesuit undertaking amongst the Guaraní. Against this backdrop, both men develop interwoven conflicts of interpretations of Christian social ethics as well as the essence of Christianity, personalities, human moral responsibilities and dilemmas, and relations between church and state. Both Hochwälder and Bolt underscore their respect for the practical benefits of missionary work and emphasise their abhorrence of military intervention as a means of resolving conflict. There are also significant differences which go far beyond the obvious ones springing from the fact that Hochwälder wrote for the stage while Bolt created a text intended for a film bearing some marks of an epic. Between *Das heilige Experiment* and *The Mission*, however, lies *The Strong Are Lonely*, the only version to which Bolt had convenient access. As we shall see, certain distinctive elements which set this edition apart from *Das heilige Experiment* left their mark on what the British screenwriter ultimately produced.

All three texts - Hochwälder's German version, the English translation of the French adaptation, and Bolt's screenplay - have their legitimate place in literary history as related to the saga of Christian foreign missions. Accordingly, they will all be dealt with in this study. In the present chapter we shall first summarise Hochwälder's background and the environment in which he wrote during the Second World War, then analyse the standard text of *Das heilige Experiment*, paying particular attention to central themes which relate directly or indirectly to the final product that appeared on the screen. Following this, we shall turn our attention to *The Strong Are Lonely*, focusing on crucial differences between it and *Das heilige Experiment*.

Fritz Hochwälder

To any literary scholar who derives meaning from the study of the historical context in which texts arise, the relationships between Hochwälder's place in twentieth-century European history and his dramatic presentation of events which had taken place nearly 200 years earlier will be obvious and significant. He was born on 28 May 1911 in Vienna to Jewish parents, Leonhard and Therese (*née*

König) Hochwälder. The social and professional standing of this family contradicts the indefensible stereotype of Viennese Jews as intellectuals. Leonhard Hochwälder was a self-employed upholsterer, while his wife supplemented the family's modest income by keeping a small curio shop in the same building. Fritz attended primary school in Vienna and subsequently supplemented his meagre formal education through participation in various evening courses at a public school called *Volksheim*. He followed in his father's professional footsteps and in 1936 earned his *Meisterbrief* as a master upholsterer. The young craftsman opened his own one-man shop that year.

Hochwälder's creativity found expression not merely in textiles and tacks, however. His love of the theatre began while he was a child. He remembered his primary school class attending a play and finding the experience very appealing. Hochwälder became involved in practical theatrical work shortly thereafter and began to write plays in 1930 while still a teenager. His first production, a radio play titled *Trommler*, was completed when he was barely twenty years old. There followed several other productions, some of them historical dramas, on experimental stages in Vienna during the 1930s. Yet Hochwälder remained a man of the working class during economically deprived times and an unobservant Jew during days of increasingly vitriolic anti-Semitic rhetoric as many of his countrymen hailed the accession of the National Socialists to power in Germany and looked forward to the *Anschluss* with that neighbour which eventually came in 1938.¹

With the spectre of ethnic persecution raising its ghastly head, Hochwälder that year joined the stream of German-speaking Jews who sought refuge in Switzerland. He spent the rest of the decade and the entire Second World War in that country. Unable to secure a labour permit, Hochwälder was compelled to reside for much of this period in refugee camps. Though undoubtedly initially frustrating, this ultimately proved beneficial to his career, as it gave him a great deal of time for reading and writing. His first play, *Esther*, stems from the early phase of his years in Switzerland and clearly reflects both his personal situation as well as that of European Jewry in general. It is based on the story of the Jewish maiden Esther in Hebrew Scripture. This heroine of Jewish tradition lived in Susa, the capital of the Persian Empire in the sixth century before Christ, *i.e.* during the period of the Exile. Ahasuerus, the king of that realm, added her to his harem and eventually

made her his queen. When his prime minister, Haman, convinced Ahasuerus to issue an edict authorising the obliteration of all the Jews in his domain, Esther accused Haman of treachery and succeeded in convincing her husband to reverse his position. Haman ends his life on the gallows. Fortunes are reversed on an even grander scale. Instead of being annihilated, the Jews in the Persian Empire are allowed to kill their enemies. Esther's accomplishment is commemorated in the Feast of Purim. The story of Esther is recorded in the book that bears her name and is remembered as a model of ethnic salvation from persecution.

Hochwälder's retelling of this account in 1940 is a product of its time, an allegory of the evolution of the National Socialist mentality that simply uses Biblical names. In his version, Esther, while still one of Asahuerus' concubines, traps Haman, who has plotted a *coup d'état*. The king needs a scapegoat, however, and uses the Jews in this capacity. He loves Esther, however, and assures her that he will not commit genocide against them, but merely persecute them when that seems necessary to divert the attention of his subjects from his corruption and administrative inefficiency. Asahuerus also asks to marry Esther on the grounds that she remain silent about the political purpose of his persecutions. She declines his offer, though, on the grounds that she has no moral right to save herself while other Jews suffer at the hands of her prospective husband's government. Hochwälder's *Esther*, though an intriguing and revealing commentary on the plight of Jews in Europe at that time, went largely unnoticed.

It was *Das heilige Experiment* which proved to give Hochwälder his breakthrough as a renowned playwright. He began to do serious research on the Jesuit enterprise in South America at the Central Library in Zürich, where he also read Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* and *The Demons*. In fact, however, Hochwälder's first serious exposure to the history of the Society of Jesus had come two years before his departure from Austria when he read René Fülöp-Miller's *Macht und Geheimnis der Jesuiten*. When interviewed after the Second World War about the etiology of *Das heilige Experiment*, he attributed it in part to this work. "From then on I had a theme working inside me, but not anchored yet to any dramatic structure", Hochwälder recalled. The National Socialist takeover of Austria and German expansion elsewhere in Europe provided that framework. Upon reading *The Demons*, he was struck by Dostoevsky's prediction of "the danger of a faithless socialism

which in its very materialistic faithlessness will acquire a religious tinge. Suddenly I felt the play focus inside me". This inspiration prompted Hochwalder to request a two-month leave of absence from the refugee labour camp in the canton of Ticino where he was then residing. This was granted late in 1941. Armed with a pencil and a modest amount of paper, the young Austrian repaired to the balcony of a house overlooking Ascona. Hochwalder initially hoped to use this period to work out the philosophical problems inherent in the play germinating in his mind, but his creativity accelerated to a level unprecedented in his brief career. At the end of his furlough, most of the manuscript was thus complete, albeit in a rudimentary and never published form titled *Die Jesuiten in Paraguay*.² This prototext took less than three weeks to write in December 1941.³

It varied from the published and performed version in several respects. *Die Jesuiten in Paraguay* is structured in three acts, not five. Furthermore, the action takes place on two days, not one, and is at a *reducci3n*, not in Buenos Aires. Some of the European characters that appear in *Das heilige Experiment* are absent from *Die Jesuiten in Paraguay*, although there are more Guaran. There is also a richly celebrated Feast of Saint Ignatius in the prototext but not in the published version. The Jesuit Provincial is not a Spanish priest but a man who bears the German name Sepp. Eleven of the *reducciones* have already fallen victim to Spanish military might. In general there is considerably more action in the prototext, whereas in its successor nearly everything that happens does so in a closed hearing. Moreover, several characters appear as more crude people in *Die Jesuiten in Paraguay* than they eventually become in *Das heilige Experiment*.⁴ In itself, Hochwalder's prototext is of little importance, although even a cursory comparison of it and the published version demonstrates that practically from the outset his dramatic depiction of the Jesuit undertaking amongst the Guaran was artistically flexible and subject to modification. In a sense, his achievement with its use of rather than enslavement to objective historicity was nothing new. As we have seen, earlier writers had also interjected their own interests into the story of the Society of Jesus in South America, though not always intentionally.

Hochwalder refined the work during 1942, and the play debuted at the Stadtebundtheater in Biel-Solothurn on 24 March 1943. It was warmly received, but the protraction of the war compelled Hochwalder to spend two more years in Switzerland.

After peace returned to Europe, he decided against repatriation to Austria, from which his parents had been deported to die in a Nazi concentration camp. Hochwalder remained in Switzerland, residing in Zurich until his death in 1986. Owing in part to *Das heilige Experiment*, but also to such plays as *Der Unschuldige*, *Der offentliche Anklager*, and *Der Befehl*, he gained international acclaim as one of the most creative, if conventional, German-language dramatists of the twentieth century.

Plot Summary

Das heilige Experiment is not particularly experimental. Its structure is fairly conventional, as the play is divided into five acts, each of which comprises several brief scenes. Hochwalder develops most of his characters fairly well through dialogue and, to a lesser extent, stage instructions. The entire plot takes place on 16 July 1767 at the Jesuit College in Buenos Aires, chiefly in the office of the Provincial of the Society of Jesus, a Spaniard named Alfonso Fernandez. Hochwalder creates dramatic effect principally by building up various ideological and other conflicts, some of which are hinted at quite early in the play.

The first act begins when the superior of the Jesuits in Buenos Aires, Rochus Hundertpfund, introduces two Indian chiefs, Candia and Naguacu, to the Provincial. These two men request baptism. The first question the Provincial asks after ascertaining the purpose of their visit is more revealing than one might first surmise: "Ihr wollt sehaft sein?" He also tips his hand in his second query: "Wie gro ist euer Stamm?" Only after ascertaining that Candia and Naguacu represent 7,000 of their ethnic fellows and that they wish to give up their nomadic life in favour of residence in Jesuit *reducciones* does the Provincial enquire about such spiritual and ethical matters as their willingness to serve Christ, obey the Jesuit fathers, give up their private possessions, cease to worship idols, and put aside their practice of polygyny. Candia also reveals something of his understanding of Christianity when he assures the Provincial: "Unter deiner Herrschaft, ehrwurdiger Vater, wird es unserm Volk nicht fehlen an Brot und Fleisch". The significance of this opening dialogue might be lost on many viewers of *Das heilige Experiment* or readers of the published version. In retrospect after the play is completed, however, it is apparent that from

the outset both the Provincial and these two chiefs have divergent understandings of what constitutes Christianity and that their respective positions in this regard deviate to greater or lesser extents from the sacrifices inherent in the Christian discipleship of the New Testament.

A closely related matter in the first scene concerns a central missiological controversy. Missiologists in German-speaking countries long debated the respective merits of *Einzelbekehrung*, or the conversion of individuals, and *Volkschristianisierung*, or the mass Christianisation of tribes or other ethnic groupings, as the pivotal strategy of missionary endeavours. Advocates of the former position, many though certainly not all of them Protestants affiliated with various missionary societies, argued that it was unrealistic to expect that the lines of demarcation separating genuine converts from people who were not really accepting Christianity in any meaningful way, particularly ways involving a deep *metanoia*, or change of spiritual mind, were the same as the lines separating ethnic groups. Converts to Christianity, they contended, had to be made largely one by one. Their opponents conceded that by bringing large groups of people into the church simultaneously they ran the risk of creating visible churches that comprised both wheat and tares. This, however, they saw as inevitable in any church. Furthermore, proponents of *Volkschristianisierung* argued that they could perform a major service by imbuing ethnic groups with Christian values which would influence peoples generally, even though not all nominal converts thus affected were sincere. In its endeavours to Christianise the Americas, the Roman Catholic Church often tended to employ this latter strategy. Clearly that is the case in *Das heilige Experiment*.

In the second scene of Act One we discover that the work of the Society of Jesus is imperilled in Latin America. The Provincial, Hundertpfund, and Ladislaus Oros, a Hungarian priest who bears responsibility for the military defence of the *reducciones*, discuss briefly Carvalho's efforts to denigrate the endeavours of their order but are confident that a delegation representing the Spanish Crown that has just landed in Buenos Aires will find nothing incriminating or otherwise improper in their mission. "In wenigen Stunden sind wir gerechtfertigt", Hundertpfund assures his fellows. Oros, however, remains wary. He reminds the others that Carvalho succeeded in his campaign to suppress the Jesuits in Portugal and that the order has also been expelled from France. The Provincial remains unshaken in his

confidence, however, and contends that in the latter country the problems the Jesuits faced could be attributed to the Enlightenment, specifically the philosophy of d'Alembert.⁵ The pope, this cleric believes, will protect the Society of Jesus in the New World. While the bishops of the Spanish colonies might pitch their tents in the camp of the white colonists, the Bishop of Rome would rise above their petty interests.

Hochwalder introduces his first spokesman for secular colonial interests in the fourth scene of Act One. Jose Bustillos enters the Provincial's office and protests, in the name of his fellow Catholic merchants and landowners, against the work of the Jesuits which bedevils that of secular economic interests. "Das bose Beispiel sind Eure Indios fur die unsern! Die Arbeit stockt. Es gibt noch Revolten, wenn Ihr das nicht abstellt!" When the Provincial asks what the Jesuits must halt, Bustillos replies: "Da von Euren Indios erzahlt wird, wie in Eurem Zauberstaat Milch und Honig fliet. Wie su das Christentum war ohne Sklaventreiber. Und so". Echoing a familiar refrain that has been directed for centuries at missionaries operating on stations, this landowner further accuses the Jesuits of enticing labourers away from the *estancias*, or farms, and, in one of the very few instances of humorous irony that Hochwalder has inserted into this text, bluntly asks these missionaries to leave "unser Paraguay" and "Geht zuruck, woher ihr gekommen seid!"

In the fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth scenes of Act One, all of which are very brief, Hochwalder introduces Andre Cornelis, a trader from the Netherlands who buys tea from the *reducciones*. This character has two principal functions. First, his willingness to pay a premium for superior tea grown by free Guaranı as opposed to that produced by slaves on the *estancias* underscores the economic validity of the Jesuit experiment. Secondly, Cornelis is a third-party commentator on the controversy between the Jesuits and the secular interests with whom they are in conflict. The fact that he is not merely an alien in the Spanish Empire, but also a Calvinist (a fact which may have had particular significance in Switzerland, divided as that country's Christians are into nearly equal Roman Catholic and Reformed ecclesiastical camps that historically have been in a state of tension with each other) also makes him a nearly disinterested commentator in the brooding dispute. Near the end of their congenial negotiating session, this prescient businessman assures the Provincial: "Wenn ich fur Euch einmal was tun kann, Provinzial,

wenn Ihr ein Asyl braucht - wir Niederländer geben auch den Jesuiten Zuflucht". To the cleric's remark that he must be joking, Cornelis declares solemnly in an unsubtle portent, "Ihr seid verloren". The Provincial seems at this stage to be of divided mind, however, wavering between worldly fatalism and ultimate idealism. He declares on the one hand that the work of the Society of Jesus is "unaufhaltsam" but on the other confesses, "Gewiß, einmal wird auch unser Staat fallen. Aber das Experiment ist gelungen. Es wird wiederholt werden. In Jahrhunderten". In the penultimate and final scenes of the first act, Don Pedro de Miura, who represents the Spanish Crown and shall conduct the hearing into the affairs of the Society of Jesus, arrives and greets his old friend the Provincial cordially but informs him cryptically that he must take measures that will be unpleasant, the first of which will be to prevent anyone from leaving the compound until the proceedings are completed. In doing so, he explains, he is merely following orders. More grave is Miura's courteous but blunt announcement that for the same period he is taking the Jesuits there into protective custody.

Most of Act Two is given to the hearing. Its nine scenes reveal that Miura, at least on the surface, conducts it in a fair manner. The pithy dialogue also sheds light on the Jesuits' attitudes towards the Guaraní and the effects of these perspectives on their missionary undertaking. In the opening scene, which takes place immediately before the hearing, two Spanish colonists, Don Esteban Arago and Don Miguel Villano, discuss the difficulty they have had in gathering incriminating evidence against the Jesuits. In their dialogue the former didactically lists the three charges against the order as infidelity to the Crown, oppression of the Guaraní, and concealing from the Crown secret silver mines and, presumably, failing to pay taxes on great wealth accrued from them.

When the hearing commences, Miura again emphasises that he is merely obeying orders. There is no prosecutor; in a curious twist, the Provincial is required to state the charges against the Society of Jesus. These are partly a paraphrase of Arago's remarks made a few minutes earlier, although they are formulated more sharply. The Provincial declares, for example, that the Society of Jesus maintains a sovereign state in South America, that he and his colleagues keep the Guaraní in "Unfreiheit und Sklaverei" and that the business practices of the *reducciones* yield usurious profits that are inimical to the interests of the Spanish Empire. Miura's interrogation

of the Provincial on each of these charges indicates that they are all unsubstantiated. Indirectly, this section of the dialogue casts aspersions on the practices and religious hypocrisy of the Spanish settlers, which thereby serve as a negative foil for the ways and the sincerity of the Jesuits. This emerges most vividly when Miura questions the Provincial about the order's desire to maintain distance between indigenous converts to their faith, by creating the *reducciones*, and the European colonists: "Weil das Christentum der Indios schwindet, wenn sie mit andern spanischen oder portugiesischen Christen zusammenleben".

Along with this indictment of the settlers, the second scene of Act Two sheds light on the Provincial's perception of his order's undertaking and its missionaries' attitudes towards the Guaraní. When Miura asks him why the Jesuits have founded a state in the wilderness and expanded in a secular sense, the Provincial insists: "Wir breiten uns nicht weltlich aus. Der Staat an sich ist uns gleichgültig. Aber es ist hier in Paraguay nicht anders möglich gewesen, als über mühevollen irdischen Umweg die Seelen für Christus zu gewinnen". He appears not to comprehend the tension in this statement between denying secular expansion and acknowledging the use of secular means to achieve a religious end. Not until the closing scenes of *Das heilige Experiment* does the Provincial grasp the difficulties wrought by this contradiction in his mind.

The attitude towards the Guaraní in general poses a lesser problem, though one which is part and parcel of the overall missionary predicament. The Provincial is in fact aware of the state of dependency in which these indigenous converts are held, yet he fails to comprehend the magnitude of this situation or its responsibility for other conflicts. When Miura asks him why the Jesuits refuse to withdraw from the midst of their converts, the Provincial reveals that he and his fellows have taken an utterly paternalistic approach to missionary work which reinforces the dependency of the people whom they have evangelised and keeps them in a state of virtual childhood. "Die Indios sind es gewöhnt, daß wir für sie denken", he informs the Spanish official. "Aus unser Hand empfangen sie ihr Brot, aus unserer Hand empfangen sie Lohn und Strafe. Ich glaube nicht, daß sie auch andern Priestern gehorchen würden".

Hochwälder explores another dimension of this theme in the third scene of Act Two. Miura questions Carlos Gervazoni, the bishop of Buenos Aires, about

his relationship to the Society of Jesus and that order's place in the ecclesiastical life of the colony. This ecclesiastical official remarks that his immediate predecessor had been recalled to Spain for becoming too closely allied with established interests in Buenos Aires, although Hochwalder does little to pursue this theme. The bishop insists that he is a friend of the Jesuits, but his subsequent testimony undermines his assertion. Indeed, the central thrust of his remarks is that at least in his diocese the Society of Jesus is no longer what it once was: "Aber bei allem Respekt, den ich der Gesellschaft schulde, mu ich doch feststellen: was die Jesuiten in Paraguay aufrichten, entspricht nicht mehr dem ursprunglichen Ziel des Ordens". When Miura asks what that original intent was, the Provincial gives a stock answer which suggests that he has not adequately measured the Society's contemporary work under his supervision against that historic benchmark: "Die Bekehrung der Heiden zu Christus unter Verwendung der jeweils geeigneten Mittel; das Ansehen der heiligen Kirche und des Heiligen Vaters zu mehren; omnia ad maiorem dei gloriam". In his rejoinder, the bishop refuses to compromise his earlier statement and maintains that "die Gesellschaft Jesu hat in Paraguay eine verhangnisvolle Wandlung durchgemacht. Man mibraucht die geistliche Macht und richtet eine schrankenlose weltliche Herrschaft ber die armen Indios auf". His explanation of his accusation is an amalgam of envy and cultural and political resentment. The bishop explains that the Jesuits have prohibited the Guaran at their *reducciones* to have social intercourse with the settlers or even learn the Spanish language. He reveals his imperialistic mentality by further admitting that the Jesuits have "behandelt alte spanische Edelleute wie Fremdlinge, wie Gechtete - und das in einem Land, das die Vater dieser Spanier erobert haben". The bishop resents the unwillingness of the Jesuits to allow him or other bishops to inspect their territory in Paraguay and their adduction of privileges granted them by the Spanish Crown to govern that area independent of episcopal scrutiny - "Privilegien, die den Grimm und die Bitterkeit der alten spanischen Christen erregen mssen". One wonders whether he is any less beholden to these Spanish-Americans than his predecessor had been. His frustration in this regard is further heightened because his appeals to the Vatican for special permission to enter the Jesuit mission territory have also come to naught. "Leider sieht man drben in Europa, wenn man von Paraguay spricht, nur den uerlich blendenden Erfolg der Heidenmission . . .". Foreshadowing a concluding theme in the drama, this

bishop, despite his inability to inspect the mission at first-hand, asserts that the endeavour has been counter-productive: “Man had unter dem Vorwand der Religion eine Utopia aufgerichtet, die den Indios Nahrung, Kleidung, Sorglosigkeit, Sicherheit bringen sollte. Und man hat, anstatt aus Heiden wahre Christen zu machen, aus heidnischen Indios schnöde Materialisten gemacht”. The Christianity of the Guaraní runs shallow, he believes: “Wenn Christus nicht Brot, Fleisch, Herba-Maté garantiert, hat man kein Interesse fürs Christentum”. What the bishop fails to clarify during the hearing is his understanding of what Christianity is and how missionary endeavours should accordingly be conducted.

Miura continues the hearing by calling four Spanish colonists to the stand, namely the previously mentioned Arago and Bustillos as well as Alvaro Catalde, who identifies himself as a merchant but who in the *dramatis personae* is listed as the owner of an *estancia*, and Garcia Quesada, about whom an identical contradiction of identity exists. Economic self-interest drives their testimonies. They accuse the Jesuits of sending agents of propaganda from the *reducciones* into the cities and to their estates to convince their labourers to flee and join them in their model communities. Bustillos emphasises, ingenuously or otherwise, “Wär not, wir Spanier nähmen selbst die Sense in die Hand!” Through him, Hochwälder then broaches an even more far-reaching theme to which he returns late in the play. “Das Reich am Parana wächst. Wir stehen hier mit dem Rücken zum Meer”, Bustillos complains. “Ihr werdet sehen: in einigen Jahren liegen wir bösen, steuerzahlenden Spanier im Meer - und diese da haben in Paraguay das Reich Gottes aufgerichtet - will sagen: *ihr* Reich über lauter zufriedene, stinkende Indios”. His testimony adds a dimension of explicit racism to the interlocking issues of preserving the Spanish Empire and the economic interests of the colonists. Unlike the bishop, neither Bustillos nor any of the other lay settlers evinces the slightest concern for the spiritual well-being of the indigenes in their midst.

Catalde's rôle is to call attention to the military aspect of the *reducciones*. Referring to a Jesuit at the hearing who is wearing spurs and who is later identified as Ladislaus Oros, the former Hungarian military officer who was decorated for his exploits in uniform before taking his vows, Catalde informs Miura that the Society of Jesus has an army of considerable size, weapons factories, and munitions depots in its Paraguayan territory. He insinuates that this force comprising indigenous

soldiers is not merely for defensive purposes but poses a threat to Spanish hegemony in parts of South America.

In the fifth and sixth scenes of Act Two, Hochwalder dismisses the superficial charge of unfair economic practices as irrelevant to the disposition of this case. Father William Clarke, the procurator of the Society of Jesus in that province, testifies that far from underselling the Spanish colonial tea farmers, the Jesuits actually can demand a higher price for the leaves they sell on behalf of the Guaran. Cornelis corroborates this, explaining that the tea produced under benevolent labour practices at the *reducciones* is superior to that grown by slaves under exploitative conditions on Spanish-American plantations. When Miura asks this Netherlander whether the Indians are lazy, the Protestant Cornelis states that he has received special dispensation to visit the Jesuit mission territory and gives a qualified reply: “Ja - als Sklaven unter der Peitsche, da sind sie faul. Aber in den Siedlungen, wo man sie nicht schindet, sechs Stunden Arbeit am Tag, und dann: Musik, Nahrung in Mengen - und Gottesdienst!”

The final testimony which Miura hears is that of Oros. This rugged Magyar priest shares some of the Provincial’s attitude towards the indigenous population, stating that “aus wilden Kriegshaufen haben wir Jesuiten disziplinierte Regimente gemacht”. He explains that the total force that can be mobilised comprises 30,000 men. In response to Miura’s questioning, Oros adds that his defence structure includes cannon factories and that some of the *reducciones* manufacture rifles and ammunition in quantities sufficiently large to provide for the army’s needs. The charge of disloyalty to the Spanish Crown evaporates when Oros informs Miura that his army has engaged in combat no fewer than forty times to protect parts of the Spanish Empire, although the precise nature of these engagements is not specified. At the same time, Oros emphasises that his fully obedient forces have no aggressive intentions and that their purpose is “jedem mit der Waffe zu begegnen, der Gottes Staat in Paraguay vernichten will”. Returning to an evolving theme, Miura remarks that “Gottes Staat hat sich sehr weltlich umgetan!”

Das heilige Experiment arguably reaches its climax early, in the eighth scene of Act Two. Miura asks everyone except the Provincial to leave the room. Miura then appears to have reached his decision when he informs the Jesuit official that the accusations raised against the order are clearly false. Elated, the Provincial

declares gleefully, "Ihr werdet uns endgültig davon reinwaschen!" He has spoken too soon. In one of the pithiest lines in this drama, Miura replies, "Ihr seid bereits verurteilt". He explains that in Madrid several months earlier the king uncritically accepted as valid the false charges raised against the Society of Jesus. The hearing in Buenos Aires, in other words, has been a charade, or at best a *pro forma* proceeding. Miura hands a royal letter to the Provincial, who reads it aloud:

"Da es erwiesen ist, daß die Jesuiten in Paraguay Unserer Krone abtrünnig geworden; da es erwiesen ist, daß sie unter dem Vorwand der Religion Sklaverei und Bedrückung unter Meinem indianischen Volk aufgerichtet, da es erwiesen ist, daß sie sich durch Verheimlichung von Bergwerken bereichert; da es erwiesen ist . . . befehle ich kraft Meiner höchsten Gewalt, die der Allmächtige in Meine Hände niedergelegt hat, daß alle Ordenspersonen der Gesellschaft Jesu die paraguayischen Provinz zu räumen haben und daß ihre Güter eingezogen werden. Gegeben zu Buen Retiro, am 27. Februar 1767. ICH, KÖNIG".

Incensed at being found guilty without due process of law, the Provincial declares that the verdict is invalid and concludes that the king has been deceived, an opinion which Miura can only confirm. Indeed, the royal emissary sympathises with the Provincial and assures him that he cannot carry out the verdict and will report accordingly to the king upon his return to Spain. Nonetheless, Miura makes it clear that the die have been cast. "Aber euer Staat - euer Staat muß fallen!" When the Provincial naïvely asks how such injustice can be justified, Miura evades the issue in this particular case by making two categorical assertions: "Wir alle tun Unrecht. Da ist kein Staat in dieser Welt, der nicht mit himmelschreiendem Unrecht beladen wäre". What is at issue, he makes clear, are not the moral issues debated during the hearing. Ironically, precisely because the Jesuits have done well their experiment must end. Miura's words are severe: "Und eben, *weil* ihr recht habt, müßt ihr vernichtet werden! Vernichtet - rücksichtslos vernichtet!" It is a question of *Realpolitik*, he explains, with the future of the Spanish Empire supposedly at stake, as indeed Bustillos had hinted in his comment that the expansion of the *reducciones* threatening to drive the colonists into the sea. Thus is added yet another basic conflict to the

matrix of confrontations which comprise *Das heilige Experiment*, namely altruism *versus* the brute force of nationalism. In a central moral lesson of this tragedy, Miura admits that irony rules: "Wir dehnen uns durch unsere Kriege aus - ihr durch euren Frieden. Wir bröckeln ab. Ihr sammelt an". He extrapolates the success of the Jesuits in central South America and concludes that their undertaking perils the position of the Spanish Crown there. "Morgen habt ihr fünfunddreißig Siedlungen. In einigen Jahren siebzig. Wie lange dauert es noch - und euch gehört der ganze Kontinent!" The Provincial's idealistic understanding of the *reducciones* has no cogency in the ears of this royalist. "Dieses Experiment ist heilig! Wer es anrührt, wer es freventlich stört, sündigt an Gott!" the cleric warns. Miura leaves no doubt about the priorities of the people whom he represents: "Sprecht nicht von Religion, wo unsere Interessen auf dem Spiel stehen!" When the defiant and embittered Provincial insists that no worldly power can compel him to abandon the experiment, Miura poses the historical dilemma which the Society of Jesus faced in the 1760s: "Eure Weigerung wäre der Untergang Eures Ordens im ganzen spanischen Weltreich! Überlegt: in Frankreich und Portugal ist die Gesellschaft Jesu verboten. Wir lassen euch im ganzen spanischen Reich bestehen - wenn ihr euch aus Paraguay freiwillig zurückzieht". The Provincial protests against this unveiled extortion. To Miura, however, the ends justify the means: "Für das Wohl meines Landes nehme ich jedes Mittel in Kauf". He repeats the ultimatum for dramatic effect: "Paraguay - oder der Orden, Pater Provincial".

The attempts to resolve this dilemma, while not really anticlimactic, never rise to the same level of dramatic tension which the conflicts during the hearing and in the confrontation between Miura and the Provincial establish. In the ninth scene of Act Two, the Provincial informs Oros, who enters his office, that an attempt is afoot to destroy cowardly God's state. Ever defiant, the spur-wearing Oros declares that he is willing to begin the resistance. Hochwälder then restates - perhaps superfluously - a fundamental conflict of loyalties to worldly and spiritual powers that has arisen. "Hier gilt nur ein Recht - das Recht des Königs" Miura asserts. The Provincial counters: "Hier gilt nur *ein* Recht - das Recht Gottes!" In the name of that law, he then arrests Miura, who responds by wondering aloud how the Jesuits can now regard themselves as innocent.

In Act Three, Hochwälder addresses directly the purpose of missionary work and, by implication, of Christianity in general. Again, this question is posed in

terms of conflicting views with which he attempts to create another height in dramatic effect. Rather than pitting the Jesuits against secular powers, however, Hochwalder resorts to a cheap and entirely gratuitous theatrical device to place the conflict squarely within the Society of Jesus. This takes place during a confrontation between the Provincial and a shadowy character named Lorenzo Querini, who has just arrived in Buenos Aires and been a peripheral auditor during the hearing, his presence there required by Miura's closure of the Jesuit college in which it has taken place. In a symbolic gesture, Querini strides behind the desk and sits down in the Provincial's chair, thus taking a posture of authority. Shocked by this affront, the Provincial demands to know his identity. Querini replies in Latin: "Minimus servus servorum in nomine societatis Jesu". The Provincial refuses to accept this until Querini states that the General of the order has sent him to Buenos Aires incognito as his legate to investigate matters. Believing that Querini can extricate him and his fellow Jesuits from their predicament, the Provincial is momentarily elated until the legate unexpectedly orders him to restore power to the Miura and the other Spanish officials. The two men argue briefly about the merits of the case against the Jesuits. When the Provincial insists that the king issued his decree only after being deceived and lied to, Querini deflates his hope in an immediate resolution of the dilemma and, presumably, increases his disillusionment by stating bluntly, "Das ist mir gleichgultig".

Their subsequent conversation goes straight to the heart of the matter when Querini makes it clear that his understanding of the Society of Jesus' task is almost diametrically opposed to that of Provincial and, in turn, at odds with the goals of the *reducciones*. To the puzzlement of the Provincial, the legate goes so far as to declare that the Jesuits bear massive guilt for what they have done in Paraguay. Querini's understanding of the task of Jesuit ministry is entirely otherworldly. He contrasts what has been done in Paraguay with what the order should be doing: "Und wir, die wir genau wissen, da wir im Grund machtlos sind, wir haben uns um ueren Erfolges willen selbst in die Netze der Macht verstrickt - wir, die wir frei von Parteinahme in allen Landern der verzweifelnden, unterdruckten, leidenden Menschheit den Weg zu ebnen haben in jenes Reich, in das uns alle erst der Tod entlat". Querini sees no possibility of in any way establishing the Kingdom of God amongst sinful people and sees the Jesuit experiment with its *reducciones* as

a doomed effort to do precisely that through literal adherence to the commands of Christ: “In einer Welt, in der unausrottbar Habgier und Niedertracht herrschen, haben wir uns unterfangen, das reine Wort Christi in die Tat zu setzen”. In an implicit allusion to the ethics of the New Testament, the Provincial accuses Querini of thereby allying with worldly powers rather than maintaining solidarity with the poor. Surprisingly, the legate immediately agrees and does so with apparent enthusiasm: “Ja, gewiß. Gerade an der Seite der Gewalt ist unser Platz”. He seeks to justify this position by arguing that the powerful need the ministry of the Jesuits: “Im Herzen der Grausamen und Mächtigen müssen wir die christlichen Tugenden erwecken”. What the purpose of such an endeavour should be, however, and what relationship the awakening of Christian virtues is to the establishment of the Kingdom of God, Querini leaves a mystery.

The Provincial seeks to steer the discussion back to the Guaraní, though without arguing their case explicitly on Querini’s terms by mentioning their need for the morality of the Gospel. Instead, the Provincial merely finds it regrettable that the withdrawal of the Jesuits from Paraguay will cut off hundreds of thousands of unconverted Guaraní from Christian salvation. Querini’s initial response to this is no less shocking than some of Miura’s remarks. “Diese Art von Christen sind uns nicht erwünscht”, he declares flatly. Querini contends that the poor and wretched of the earth distort Christianity: “Sie nehmen unsere heilige Religion als Schutz, Nahrung, Sorglosigkeit, wohlwollende und gerechte Führung”. He fails to mention that the wealthy and powerful people of Christendom - a category which would presumably include himself and countless others of his stripe - have also long appropriated the Gospel to serve their economic and other worldly ends, using religion as a means of legitimising their power and a tool for the exploitation of the weak, both Christian and non-Christian. That Hochwälder was incognizant of this tendency, which had long been a target of both Marxist and non-Marxist critics in German-speaking countries, is implausible, although he does not explore the theme explicitly in *Das heilige Experiment*.

In any case, the Provincial does not immediately capitulate. He insists that there is a linkage between social ministry and salvation. When Querini declares that the task is to save souls, the Provincial replies that it will be impossible to do so if people are left at the mercy of their oppressors. “Eindeutig müssen wir

unseren Platz beziehen an der Seite der Mühseligen und Beladenen", he affirms. Querini is equally intransigent, however, maintaining that to do so would be imprudent. "Es brächte unserer heiligen Religion unermeßlichen Schaden", he states cryptically. When the Provincial retorts that Christianity will have failed if the Jesuits withdraw from Paraguay, the legate counters that the faith will have retained its purity. Again he couches his argument in extremely reproachful language: "Ohne von uns bemerkt zu werden, hat sich Satan in unser Werk geschlichen". His argument continues to predicate the total incompatibility of the Kingdom of God and the present world. Hochwälder again relies on a Swiss Calvinist allusion in underscoring this point. "Wodurch unterscheidet sich noch der Staat der Jesuiten von der Genfer Republic des Erzketzers Calvin?" asks Querini, who clearly holds no brief for the theocratic model of church-state relations. The Provincial has no answer to this rhetorical query, but in a last-ditch effort to save the *reducciones* he invites the legate to visit them. Querini refuses this offer, however, and merely imposes Jesuit discipline to which the Provincial assents.

The Provincial despairs. In the extremely brief fifth and final scene of Act Three, he appears as a symbolic quasi-Christ figure. At his desk he attempts to pray and, grasping his crucifix, finally utters petitions corresponding to the death of Christ on Calvary. "Anima Christi, sanctifica me - Corpus Christi, salve me - Sanguis Christi, inebria me - Aqua lateris Christi - lava me". The Provincial briefly places himself on the cross and asks in words reminiscent of Christ's moment of despair, "O mein Gott! - Warum verlässest du immer wieder diese Welt - warum?"

The Provincial finally relents. At the beginning of the fourth act, he gathers Hundertpfund, Clarke, and Oros in his office and instructs them to co-operate with the Spanish in the surrender of the *reducciones*. All three of these non-Spanish Jesuits initially protest but soon appear to yield to his unwelcome command in accordance with their vow of obedience. In the following scene the Provincial similarly commands several Guaraní to vacate the *reducciones* and submit to Spanish imperial rule. The indigenes discuss this amongst themselves in his presence. Their dialogue focuses on their perception of Christianity and the contrast between the Christ of the Spanish and that which the Jesuits have given them. The Provincial dismisses their pleas that submission to the colonists will bring economic devastation and ultimately genocide. "Ihr müßt euer Kreuz auf euch nehmen. . . . Gedenkt der

Leiden Unseres Herrn", he suggests in words which the situation gives a hollow ring. It belatedly occurs to the Provincial that the appeal of Christianity to the Guaraní is something different from that which he and his fellow missionaries have intended. He asks Hundertpfund to fetch Candia and Naguacu, the two chiefs who earlier that day requested baptism. "Ich will ergründen, was ihnen Christus so begehrenswert macht", he explains.

In the third scene of Act Four, the militant Oros revokes his promise to cooperate in the disbanding of the Guaraní military force. His action adds another dimension of conflict to the plot, as it pits him against the Provincial, who continues to insist on conventional Jesuit obedience to one's superiors. "Das Gehorsamsgelübde is aufgehoben, wenn der Vorgesetzte zur Sünde verleitet", Oros explains in seeking to justify his unwillingness to obey. He announces that he will fight to his last breath alongside his indigenous soldiers. In the exchange which immediately follows, Hochwälder injects another element of irony into the plot. The Provincial expels him on the spot from the Society of Jesus. "Vielleicht sind wir alle längst keine Jesuiten mehr!" the banished priest replies. The seeming paradox lies in the fact that Oros, who more than any of his fellow Jesuits has employed worldly means in his rôle as a missionary, should imply that the order has departed from its original ideals. To be sure, this is in itself problematical, given the military background of Ignatius Loyola and the willingness of the Society of Jesus to engage in secular pursuits practically from the outset. Oros seems to be aware of this. He accuses the Provincial of deserting the flag - presumably either that of Jesuit tradition or of the *reducciones* - and insists that the Provincial will not succeed in reversing the order's achievement amongst the Guaraní.

In the fourth scene the increasingly disillusioned Provincial questions Candia and Naguacu more deeply about their desire to become Christians and particularly about why they wish to be baptised by the Jesuits rather than by secular priests responsible to the bishop of Buenos Aires. Candia answers succinctly: "Der Christus des Bischofs is nicht der eure". He and Naguacu explain that the Christ of the *reducciones* gives food, clothing, accommodation, weapons, and protection from slave-traders. The theologically ignorant Candia professes what the theologically informed would call works righteousness: "Wenn man ihn verehrt, wird man belohnt". The Provincial realises that the Christ of the Guaraní mind is not that

of the cross. "Das ist der Christus, den wir euch gebracht haben", he comments wistfully on the indigenes' image of their Saviour. "Oh - ihr seid von uns getäuscht worden. Christus verleiht keine Sicherheit, ernährt nicht, bekleidet nicht - er selbst ist arm und bloß . . .".

Fighting between the Guaraní and Spanish troops erupts outside the Jesuit college. Neither Oros nor his soldiers evince the slightest willingness to obey the Provincial. When that cleric ventures outside and commands the shooting to cease, he is wounded by gunfire. Whether a Spanish soldier, a Guaraní, or Oros has shot him remains a tantalising but unanswered question.

In any case, the injured Provincial staggers back into his office and in the terse seventh scene of Act Four utters his strongest words of the entire play shortly before his death. Summoning his last modicum of energy, he tears from the wall the map of the Jesuit mission territory which has served repeatedly as an incisive symbol of the order's achievement in Paraguay and declares that no individual person has wounded him: "Dieses . . . hat . . . es getan! Mein . . . eigenes . . . Werk . . . Dieser Staat - der Antichrist!!" On the wall remains only a portrait of Saint Francis Xavier, the first Jesuit foreign missionary in the sixteenth century. The symbolism of the transient and the permanent in the Society of Jesus is too unsubtle to require comment. Quite unconcerned about Jesuit tradition, Miura, Villano, and Arago rejoice in their triumph. "Wir sind am Ziel", pronounces Miura in the eighth and final scene of Act Four. "Das Reich Gottes ist beim Teufel!"

The five-page fifth act contains *inter alia* Hochwälder's commentary, voiced chiefly through the Netherlander Cornelis, on the absurd counter-productivity of attempting to live by force, and the *coda* of the Provincial. Cornelis sarcastically congratulates Miura on his victory over the Jesuits. With the power of the sword, this international trader declares with no mean hyperbole, the Spanish have established an empire on which the sun never sets. Taking a torch out of its iron ring holder, however, Cornelis illuminates a slowly rotating globe and qualifies his praise. The Spanish have lost their possessions in the East Indies, he remarks without noting that the Netherlands have inherited them, and the Netherlands themselves are no longer under the hegemony of the Spanish Crown. Their Calvinist churches, moreover, have survived Spanish Catholic efforts to eradicate them. No more a

historian than Hochwalder, Cornelis adds the Philippines, Calicut, Goa, and the Cape of Good Hope to his verbal list of erstwhile Spanish possessions.

The principal speaker in the final act, though, is the Provincial, who seeks to come to terms with his beliefs and actions. He damns Oros, who has been sentenced to death for his part in the insurrection against the Spanish officials, for disobeying him and thereby supposedly bringing the Society of Jesus into disrepute. When Oros confesses his sin, however, the Provincial is sacramentally compelled to forgive him. Indeed, the Provincial believes he must do so in order for God to forgive his own sin. He explains that he too was disobedient because he briefly abandoned his ideals and took the side of the mighty, as Miura and Querini had commanded him. He contrasts his own behaviour with that of Saint Francis Xavier, whose labours as a missionary helped to bring the Gospel to part of Asia unaccompanied by military force. The Provincial then dies.

In the final scene of *Das heilige Experiment* the other Jesuits present, minus Oros, who has been led out to die before a firing squad, kneel around their fallen leader and pray in Latin. Miura joins them, although he declares that his heart still burns for Spain and its king. He is of divided mind, however, and, quoting Matthew 16:26, “Was hulfe es, wenn ich die ganze Welt gewonne, und nahme doch Schaden an meiner Seele . . .”.

The Strong Are Lonely - A Play with a Difference

As indicated in the Introduction, the French adaptation of *Das heilige Experiment*, titled *Sur la terre comme au ciel* provided the basis for the English translation, *The Strong Are Lonely*, which Bolt saw in Britain during the mid-1950s. The English rendering is, to be sure, essentially the same play which Hochwalder wrote, yet it differs markedly from his German text in ways which go far beyond merely poor translation. To begin with, it is approximately 20 per cent longer. Furthermore, *The Strong Are Lonely* is structured somewhat differently; the five acts of *Das heilige Experiment* are now, with only minor shifts of borders, now called scenes. The first act comprises two scenes which correspond to the first two acts of the German text. The second act encompasses that version’s final three acts, now designated

scenes. The stage directions are generally more detailed in the English text. The list of *dramatis personae* has also grown a bit to include three additional Jesuit priests, two of whom have German surnames while the third is apparently Spanish. None of these three newcomers, however, is of significance in the plot or dialogue of *The Strong Are Lonely*. Father Rochus Hundertpfund now has a different German surname, one which is much more readily pronounceable on the British stage, Lieberman. In both versions of the play there is an obvious emphasis to depict the Jesuits of Paraguay as an international lot, presumably to underscore the universality of the overarching themes which Hochwalder presents. Furthermore, as in *Das heilige Experiment* the entire plot takes place at the Jesuit college in Buenos Aires on 16 July 1767. Most significantly, the basic events of the plot remain unaltered, although there are certain modifications which will merit our attention. Far more parts of the dialogue have been modified, and in several instances these alter the meaning of what is being said, both in its immediate context and with regard to larger themes of the drama. Some of the alterations, in turn, ultimately appear to have affected *The Mission*.

One of the first of these modifications - one which may have more significance than meets the theologically untrained eye - occurs very early in Act One in a conversation between the Provincial and Lieberman immediately after the former has interviewed Candia and Naguacu. The former remarks, "The Kingdom of God is growing". In Hochwalder's German text, however, the Provincial says, "Gottes Staat wachst", *i. e.* placing the emphasis is squarely on the demographic expansion of the *reducciones*, not on the furtherance of God's rule. The difference may seem subtle, but it is crucial to the overall theme of the play.

One elision and one addition in the same exchange influence Bolt's screenplay. In the German text, Hundertpfund comments briefly on Sebastian Carvalho's (*i. e.* Pombal's) intriguing against the Society of Jesus. In the English version, however, there is no mention of this Portuguese politician. On the other hand, Lieberman proudly describes the musicians whom he and Father Reinegg have trained to herald the arrival of the delegation from Spain. No such fanfare greets their advent in *Das heilige Experiment*.

Less significant changes follow shortly thereafter when the Provincial converses with both Oros and Lieberman. The Provincial now directs Oros to fraternise with

Villano and drink wine with him in an attempt to discover what the purpose of the investigation is. In *Das heilige Experiment*, however, this command is given to Hundertpfund, not Oros. Furthermore, in the English version the Provincial mentions the miracle in which Jesus changed water into wine at Cana (John 2) as part of his justification of the requested foray into espionage; this is absent from Hochwalder's text. Hochwalder's reference to d'Alembert in the Provincial's flippant dismissal of the Enlightenment as the Jesuits' real enemy in France has been excised in the English version.

When Cornelis and Father Clarke haggle over the price of the tea which the former wishes to buy, one encounters what appears to be simply an error of translation. In German Clarke reminds the Netherlander that the *reducciones* need *Eisen*, but in *The Strong Are Lonely* this is still a raw material, "iron ore", making one wonder whether the Jesuits had developed means of refining that mineral for the Guaran. When the Provincial and Cornelis discuss the future of the Jesuit enterprise a few minutes later, the Netherlander tells him in the English version that "this young giant of yours is a dangerous neighbour", thereby adding another element to the crescendo of signs of doom which ultimately lead to the confrontation between the Provincial and Miura immediately after the hearing. In *Das heilige Experiment*, however, Cornelis does not make this portentous comment. Generally speaking, his rle as a third-party commentator has been expanded for productions in French and English.

The second scene of Act One in English, which encompasses the hearing before Miura, includes numerous modifications large and small. When Arago and Villano discuss the potential charges against the Jesuits in Hochwalder's text, the former lists four points that must be proven. In English, however, this is reduced to three by combining the alleged Jesuit oppression of the Guaran and now calling it enslavement, from which these indigenes must be liberated. The Provincial's comments about the Guaran are significantly more innocuous in English than in German. In Hochwalder's text, he states paternalistically: "Unsere Indios sind von harmloser, aber kindlicher Gemtsart". In English, however, this has become "These people are quite harmless, but they are also unenlightened". In harmony with this, the Provincial now softens the impression of Jesuit rule over the Guaran by stating that "they select their own Chieftains, according to tribal custom. We are beginning

to teach them the art of government as it is practised by free peoples". The Provincial's final remark on this matter is uttered while he is still giving testimony before Miura and harmonises well with what he has already said. In the German text, he declares, "Die Indios sind es gewöhnt, daß wir für sie denken. Aus unserer Hand empfangen sie ihr Brot, aus unserer Hand empfangen sie Lohn und Strafe". Much of the condescending paternalism inherent in these words is absent from the English version: "The Indians depend on us to protect their interests. Some day, in a generation or two, perhaps, they may become responsible citizens, capable of self-government; indeed, that is our hope. Meanwhile - they are used to us; they trust us".

When the Spanish settlers testify, they sometimes sing a different tune in *The Strong Are Lonely* and not infrequently add several measures to their parts. Bustillos, resenting what he regards as inveigling rhetoric that has attracted the labourers away from his *estancia*, tells Miura in Hochwälder's text, "Wär not, wir Spanier nähmen selbst die Sense in die Hand!" In English, however, this becomes "Pretty soon you'll see a fine sight - the gentlemen of Spain forced to go out into their own fields and bring in the crops themselves - and then what will become of the Indians' respect for the white man?" The testimony of Catalde concerning the Guaraní military force, moreover, is considerably expanded in the English version. He denies the contention that this army is purely for defensive purposes. "It's an old game, Señor Deputy, and you know it as well as I do", he argues. "You decide you want someone out of your way - or you're tired of being ruled once you're stronger than the man who rules you; so you say you're acting in self-defence against an act of tyranny and aggression - and before he can answer, you open fire. In the name of God, of course".

Lieberman, formerly Hundertpfund, broaches the topic of music in his testimony, as he had done in his early conversation with the Provincial. He supplements his testimony with an account of the role of musical instruments in the first Jesuit contacts with the Guaraní. "When the first of our Fathers penetrated these virgin forests, music was their vanguard - their sole defence. Instead of guns they carried an oboe or two, a trumpet and a few viols", he explains. In the stage instructions, Lieberman is "carried away by his story". He continues: "They sailed up the great rivers in their boats, chanting chorales and plain-song, and the Indians followed them along

the shore spellbound. Little by little, the Indians joined in the singing; the Fathers translated the hymns for them and organized them into choirs. Instead of killing each other, they sang together". The special significance of this passage will become apparent when we examine Bolt's depiction of the Jesuit penetration into parts of the Guaraní territory and how this differs from Lieberman's account with regard to at least one crucial detail. Miura finds this element of Jesuit mission strategy highly impressive, if indirectly threatening to imperial interests, and mentions to the Provincial after the hearing that "you brought songs instead of swords, so that the Spanish sword is hated and the Jesuit music is the magic of the new god".

The testimony of Oros is also enhanced. In a new section of the dialogue, he tells Miura that "the Indians can copy anything you give them, once they have the model and you show them how it works". These words would recur in Bolt's screenplay, as does the spirit of Oros's comment that the Jesuits "make both the guns and the ammunition for them", albeit in a different context.

Act Two of *The Strong Are Lonely*, corresponding to the third, fourth, and fifth acts of *Das heilige Experiment*, also contains numerous enhancements and other modifications, some of them consequential. One of the most significant changes occurs near the end of the second scene, in which the wounded Provincial staggers back into his office. As indicated earlier, Hochwalder does not clarify who shot him. In the English version, however, there is little doubt, if indeed Arago is telling the truth, as appears to be the case. Referring to the rebellious Guaraní, he tells his colleague Villano: "When they saw the Father Provincial fall - when they realized they themselves had shot him - they collapsed completely".

Aesthetically, the most intriguing change incorporated in the English text occurs in the third scene of Act Two. As the curtain rises, Lieberman is leading his fellow Jesuits in Latin prayers around the body of the Provincial. Whether the latter has already died is initially unclear in the English version, although we soon learn that he is still alive. While his surviving fellow Jesuits provide a pious background by uttering their petitions and concluding with a *Pater Noster*, Miura, Arago, and others discuss the case in the foreground and hand down sentences of death and deportation for the Guaraní and the Jesuits who have taken part in the uprising. Some of the petitions harmonise with these decrees. For example, as Miura directs Villano to

take command of a firing squad, the priests pray responsively: "Libera eum, Domine. A periculo mortis. Libera eum, Domine. A male morte".

Before succumbing, the Provincial expresses an opinion which does not occur in the German text. "You and I were wrong, Oros. Violence can never conquer violence - bloodshed solves nothing", he explains. "But he [*i. e.* Querini] was wrong too - he said that only after death should men know happiness and peace. That I do not believe! If that is the truth - then I die a heretic - but it is not the truth!" This clarification, though pedantic, provides a key to understanding both the German and the English versions of this play.

Conclusion

Hochwalder was both a product of his time and a prophetic voice against the fascist movements which repeatedly reared its totalitarian head in it. *Das heilige Experiment* was not, of course, the only widely lauded drama in German which sought to alert viewers to the ills which the Third Reich represented; one thinks of such contemporary works as Bertolt Brecht's *Das aufhaltsame Aufstiege des Arturo Ui* in this regard.

That Hochwalder, writing in exile under what from both emotional and practical viewpoints were clearly exacting circumstances, would choose from many historical examples of the predicaments in which religious establishments have been placed during times of great duress elect that of the closure of the Jesuit missions testifies loudly to the enduring force of this chapter of ecclesiastical history. There is no reason to assume that Hochwalder selected it merely because he had access in Zurich to Fulöp-Miller history which he had previously read in Vienna. It seems far more plausible to conclude that in this compelling story he believed he had discovered a brilliant historical mirror which reflected, *mutatis mutandis* the grim reality of the moral quandary in which he found Europe during the 1940s.

What can be said about the role of Hochwalder's own religious beliefs in this regard? No attempt is made here to assess the depth of his commitment to the spiritual legacy of his forefathers or twentieth-century Jewish beliefs and practices. That Hochwalder found in the history of Judaism a treasure trove of religious and ethical

significance is apparent; one need only consider his *Esther* in this respect. That said, it cannot be reasonably argued that his intellectual, literary, and spiritual identity could be summed up in Judaism. Like most of his religio-ethnic fellows in Austria, Hochwalder had been exposed to many other currents in Vienna and elsewhere. But apart from an inescapable awareness of persecution as a *Leitmotiv* in the history of European Judaism, one which had profoundly influenced the course of his own life, and the impact which this made on *Das heilige Experiment* in a broad, underlying sense, there is little in that tragedy which must be ascribed to its author's Jewishness. This work could have as easily come from the pen of a Gentile playwright.

Before turning to the creation of *The Mission*, we shall consider how the portrayal of missionaries in the cinema has tended to fall into several stereotypical categories and certain dimensions of Latin American liberation theology which had come to the fore by the 1980s. These factors, against the backdrop of the deeply entrenched tradition of exploiting the history of Jesuit missions in South America as evidence in support of contemporary causes, made a profound impact on the message of that film.

Notes

1. Frederic Morton, "Drama about Jesuits", *The New York Times*, 27 September 1953, p. 1.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Wilhelm Bortenschlager, *Der Dramatiker Fritz Hochwalder* (Innsbruck: Universitatsverlag Wagner), p. 64.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 64-69.
5. Jean Le Rond d'Alembert (1717-1783), a French geometer and philosopher, assisted Diderot in the preparation of the *Encyclopaedia* and wrote its "Discours Preliminaire". He was a staunch foe of organised religion, especially the influence of the Roman Catholic Church in France. D'Alembert was an internationally known sceptic with regard to orthodox doctrines of the existence and nature of God. His ethical views, moreover, clashed with those of the Church.

CHAPTER SIX

MISSIONARY IMAGES IN THE CINEMA

The Mission was by no means the first feature film to focus primarily on endeavours to propagate the Gospel and maintain young churches in areas outside historic Christendom. For approximately half a century such efforts had provided the themes, or at least the setting, for literally dozens of cinematographic productions in Britain, the United States of America, and other countries. It would be only a slight exaggeration to state that missionary work rivalled the Bible as providing thematic material for the silver screen. Much of this sub-genre has been produced in a historic mode. Since the 1930s screenwriters and directors had depicted such events and personalities as David Livingstone's penetration of southern Africa, the coming of Christianity to North American aboriginal peoples, the plight of foreign missionaries caught in areas which the Japanese held during the Second World War, and the clash of New England Protestantism with Polynesian culture in the South Pacific.

To missiologists, or, for that matter, other people quite familiar with the history of Christian missions, the extent of this cinematographic production for decades might prove surprising, as most missionary work would seem far more suited to treatment in lengthy novels than films. After all, at the level of day-to-day reality, attempts to propagate Christianity have involved immeasurably more drudgery than drama, though incidents of the latter have not been entirely unknown. Such central themes as means of presenting the Gospel in the dress of indigenous cultures and the establishment of churches have occupied much of the time which missionaries have spent on the field for centuries but do not lend themselves readily to cinematization in ways which find mass appeal. One could cynically conclude that most historically accurate portrayals of missionary work would lull general film audiences into somnolence within minutes.

Producers and other creators of films have circumvented this inescapable fact in at least two general ways, both of which distort missionary endeavours. First, they have excised most aspects of routine daily life on mission stations and other venues of the propagation of Christianity and depicted those infinitesimal

portions of the general endeavour which might arouse interest outside specialised circles. Secondly, they have granted themselves unbridled imaginative licence in creating both characters and dramatic situations. Not infrequently, the former are missionaries who in one way or another differ markedly from their historical counterparts. In the cinema, missionaries tend to be zealous, narrow-minded individuals, intent on imposing their rigidly pietistic secular and religious beliefs, values, and behaviour on the peoples whom they are seeking to evangelise. Concomitantly, such dimensions of their work as educational and health ministries, which have been mainstays of missionary endeavours on an interdenominational front since the nineteenth century, receive scant attention. In some though by no means all instances, the non-Christian societies to whom Christianity is being brought are depicted in almost Edenic terms. The message of this approach is simple: Christianity has been the bane of non-European, pre-modern civilisations, an unwelcome and imposed religion which, in tandem with political and economic imperialism, has decimated and subjugated entire populations, contributed heavily to the undermining and eventual destruction of rich cultural legacies, and generally replaced indigenous happiness with despondency and gloom. The general unwillingness of missiologists and other knowledgeable individuals to produce historically and culturally accurate counters to these sorts of films has left the latter largely unchallenged. The stereotypes have thus continued for decades.

The plurality of the types must be underscored. As indicated above, Christian foreign missionaries are generally portrayed as ardent believers with little or no respect for the cultures of the people whom they are evangelising. They are not a homogeneous lot, however, but fall into several categories. Since early in the twentieth century, missionaries in commercial films have tended to be religious zealots, cultural imperialists, adulterers, secret alcoholics, or people of infirm faith. Of course, these personal defects do not always manifest themselves in isolation; some missionaries are plagued by two or more such debilitating weaknesses.

One scarlet thread of consistency uniting many of the cinematic missionaries of the past six decades has been hypocrisy. Again and again their personal conduct has conflicted with the moral ideals which they have proclaimed as central to the Christian message. An irresistible temptation for screenwriters, it seems, has been to fabricate dramatic tension in part by highlighting the cleft between proclaimed

ideals and actual - or supposed - behaviour. To be sure, this contradiction is played in only a minor key in *The Mission*, where much of the tension involves divergent understandings of the legitimacy of violence in the defence of oppressed indigenous peoples, but in many other films about Christian missionaries the plot features it as a virtual *Leitmotiv*.

Livingstone

There is perhaps no more appropriate place to begin our survey than with *Livingstone*, a silent film which was presented to the British public in 1925. Its title had been a household word in the United Kingdom for more than half a century before the film was made on location in southern and central Africa. David Livingstone was born in Scotland in 1813 and studied theology as well as medicine in Glasgow. This young Calvinist initially aspired to being a missionary in China, but his fellow Scotsman, the renowned Robert Moffat of the interdenominational London Missionary Society, convinced him to take the Gospel to Africa instead. Livingstone was accepted by the LMS in 1838, ordained two years later, and sailed to Cape Town in 1841. He initially served at Kuruman, near Moffat's mission to the Tswana, in the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope but spent most of the 1840s and 1850s penetrating ever more deeply into the African interior, exploring several regions which hitherto very few Europeans had seen. In 1853 Livingstone vowed, "I shall open up a path into the interior, or perish". Eventually he did both. Along the way Livingstone "discovered" what he patriotically named the Victoria Falls in 1855 and returned temporarily to Britain a national hero the following year. In addition to propagating Christianity, Livingstone protested against both Afrikaner and Portuguese mistreatment of indigenous Africans. His books about his travels and missionary work found many readers in Britain, where public interest in Africa was practically insatiable. Livingstone's loyalty to the British Empire, strongly paternalistic attitudes towards Africans, and Victorian prejudices generally struck a chord with countless readers, ensuring his popularity. He was not heard of for a few years in the late 1860s as he unsuccessfully sought the source of the Nile, however, and was widely believed to have died in Africa until Henry Stanley, a

correspondent for the *New York Herald*, went to East Africa and found him near Lake Tanganyika in 1871. This entrepreneurial journalist was unable to convince Livingstone to leave Africa with him but nevertheless helped to immortalise the man through his best-selling books about him and his own travels. Livingstone remained in Africa for the duration of his life and died in what is now Zambia in 1873, probably succumbing to the severe haemorrhoidal problems which had plagued him for decades. His reputation as a paternalistic defender of the African peoples, who, he believed, were capable of entering the “modern world”, rests on archival documentation more solid than that which Stanley’s sensationalistic and self-serving accounts provides, although recent scholarship has taken a more critical view of Livingstone than that which hitherto prevailed.

The British political and artistic climate of the early 1920s provided a nearly ideal environment for conceiving a film like *Livingstone*. The British Empire was still a global reality, but increasingly vocal anti-imperialists in both Britain and the colonies had challenged its moral and economic legitimacy since the late nineteenth century. Public sentiment, however, still tended to favour the continuation of British hegemony overseas. As two modern commentators on *Livingstone* have observed with regard to its historical context, “militarism, monarchism, patriotism, the glorification of national heroes and racial stereotyping were an integral part of this popular imperialism, along with an economic emphasis on developing the Empire’s resources and a moral belief that the imperial mission could regenerate both the peoples of the Empire and the British themselves”.¹ Conventional moral values, already at that time regarded as having reached their apogee during the Victorian era, were being eroded as British society continued to modernise after the First World War, and the decline of ethical absolutes bothered many observers. The churches, moreover, continued to lose their grip on an increasingly secular society, most notably in urban areas. When it was announced that a film about Livingstone was in the offing, political, cultural, and religious interests rallied behind the endeavour. The production team went to Africa in 1923 to photograph on location while prerelease publicity caught widespread attention in Britain. Even the filming of *Livingstone* itself became the subject of a popular book.²

The film itself drew reviews which generally ranged from fairly positive to laudatory. Rapp and Weber have attributed this in large measure to the fact that

Livingstone, besides being a considerable artistic achievement in its day, gave the British viewers confirmation of what they sought, namely a heroic protagonist, reassertion of the British Empire, and the legitimisation of imperialism as a divine instrument for the moral uplifting of Africans. The work, in brief, played to deeply ingrained prejudices.³

Livingstone emerges as an unambiguous hero in the film that bears his name. He is an intrepid explorer, a pious Christian, moral in his relations with women, loyal to Queen Victoria, and, not least, a crusader against slavery. The last-named point is underscored in the film and intimately - if in retrospect with unintentional irony - linked to the expansion of the British Empire. *Livingstone* responds affirmatively to Robert Moffat's plea that he devote his life to missionary work in Africa after the latter mentions that on that continent, and elsewhere, slavery is a "terrible scourge". In the course of the film *Livingstone* witnesses both slave raids and the degrading proceedings at a slave market in Zanzibar. He remarks that if he were able to launch a steamer on Lake Nyasa and thereby introduce European commerce, "I could ring the death-knell of this abominable slave trade". National self-interest, in other words, and social reform would go hand-in-hand. The emphasis placed on this as late as the 1920s is probably not merely coincidental; at that time, nearly a century after the campaign which William Wilberforce and like-minded abolitionists had brought an end to slavery in the British Empire, British voices were still critical of the continuing existence of the practice in such places as Portugal's African colonies.⁴ As will be seen later in the present study, this kind of linkage, attributing to historical missionaries participation in social reform movements which have twentieth-century parallels or continuities, also crops up in *The Mission*, where it becomes explicit only in a printed epilogue but has been an implicit undercurrent through much of the film.

In its presentation of the African continent and peoples, *Livingstone* is also a product of its times. As Dorothy Hammond and Alta Jablow have demonstrated, the image of Africa in British literature has fluctuated from the seventeenth century to the twentieth, often reflecting British self-perceptions which have been projected, *mutatis mutandis*, to that remote continent.⁵ In *Livingstone*, the indigenous peoples are, apart from a small number of slave raiders, children in an almost idyllic setting. Most are morally upright in their primitive way, musically talented, fascinated by

the wonders of modern technology, and generally insouciant, apart from the horrors of the slave trade. This is not to say that no realism tempers this caricature of African societies, but in the main it showed British viewers more about their own preconceived notions than about contemporary realities. The Africans in *Livingstone* are people who need the British and the social reforms which Britain and particularly its missionaries were believed to lead beneficently through much of the world. Historical accuracy was undoubtedly intended and to a debatable degree achieved in this ground-breaking film, which was also a highly tendentious work of nationalistic religious art.

Rain

Rain, based on a short story by W. Somerset Maugham, occupies a pre-eminent place in the history of literary and cinematic depictions of foreign missionaries. Strictly speaking, it has nearly half a dozen places, because after the story was published in the 1920s John Colton and Clemence Randolph quickly adapted into a play for the theatre in 1922, and eventually three films sprouted from this root. The first, starring Gloria Swanson and Lionel Barrymore, was produced as a silent piece in 1928 under the title *Sadie Thompson*. It was directed by Raoul Walsh, who also wrote the screenplay. The third, titled *Miss Sadie Thompson*, came in 1953 with Rita Hayworth and José Ferrer in the leading rôles, was directed by Jerry Wald and used a script by Harry Kleiner. The second, on which we shall focus our attention, was released in 1932. Its screenwriter was the noted American dramatist Maxwell Anderson, and Joan Crawford and Walter Huston took the foremost parts.

Rain reflects both Maugham's own intellectual leanings, a conspicuously sceptical thread in the complex fabric of British attitudes towards organised religious activity during the 1920s, and a post-Victorian willingness to break taboos by dealing relatively explicitly with sexual topics in literature. A physician by training and an atheist by conviction, Maugham gained renown as a multi-genre writer early in the twentieth century. In the wake of the First World War, he travelled extensively for several years and employed many of his meticulously recorded observations,

including some of those made in the South Pacific, in the plots of his works. On a voyage from Honolulu to Pago-Pago, Maugham observed among his fellow passengers from the United States of America a missionary couple returning to the Gilbert Islands and an apparently unattached young woman. The male missionary, he thought, had “a look of suppressed fire”, while his wife repeatedly spoke censoriously of the people in the Gilberts as thoroughly depraved and unctuously “described their marriage customs as obscene beyond description”.⁶ Although he chatted with them only briefly, the keen-eyed Englishman found in them three of the principal characters for his story, which initially appeared serially under the title “Miss Thompson” in the magazine *The Smart Set* in 1921. Subsequently, this story was published as “Rain” in Maugham’s collection *The Trembling of a Leaf*.

The plot of the short story is utterly simple, partly because Maugham artistically leaves much of it to the imagination of the reader. Aboard a steamer *en route* from Honolulu to Pago-Pago, an American couple bearing the surname Davidson who are returning to a Samoan mission field make the acquaintance of a British physician named Macphail and his wife who are headed for Australia. The Davidsons are a particularly self-righteous pair whose censorious attitude towards most of the other passengers has placed them into a self-imposed isolation from them. In conversations with the Macphails, moreover, the Davidsons make clear their disapproval of what they perceive as widespread sexual immorality amongst the Polynesia indigenes whom they have been evangelising. After the ship on which they are travelling lands at Pago-Pago, an epidemic of measles forces all the passengers, including those who intend to continue their voyages to Sydney, to remain for a fortnight, a gloomy period when the lachrymose skies empty a deluge on the island and set the tone for the interpersonal relations which are played out. The Davidsons’ parts in the dialogue form much of the ideational core of *Rain*. On the one hand, they repeatedly comment to the Macphails that the local Polynesians had no sense of sin before missionaries arrived amongst them, that these indigenes are naturally depraved, that their immaturity had tested their patience, and that native employees of the church were unreliable. This missionary couple also make it clear that their power extends not merely over the native population but that they have also manipulated the fortunes of white people of whom they do not approve. On the other hand, the Davidsons are very cool to a female passenger named Miss

Thompson, who is seen and heard cavorting with various men both on the ship and while quarantined at Pago-Pago. Eventually it is revealed that she is from the Red Light District of Honolulu and, apparently, a fugitive from justice in San Francisco, disclosures which further raises the Davidson's ire. Mr Davidson spends time reportedly evangelising this fallen woman and reports her presence to the colonial governor, who, at Davidson's behest, prevents her from continuing to Australia but insists that she be extradited to California, a decision with which Davidson gleefully approves. Eventually, Davidson commits suicide, presumably fearing that a sexual relationship he has begun with Miss Thompson while supposedly proclaiming the Word of God to her will come to light.

Hawaii

No general review of the depiction of missionaries in the cinema would be complete without consideration of one of the most celebrated films of 1966, *Hawaii*. This lengthy work and the novel on which it was based helped to establish author James Michener's reputation as a highly successful authorial entrepreneur but did little to win the acclaim of literary and film critics. In brief, the book contains some of the most severe caricatures of missionary work ever communicated through fiction, and the film brought them into bolder relief. One need only assess the portrayal of the film's central character and assay its depiction of early missionary endeavours in Hawaii with the touchstone of historical evidence to understand why general critics gave it mixed reviews while those with particular expertise excoriated it as to a considerable degree ahistorical and even slanderous.

Michener had launched his literary career shortly after completing a four-year stint as an officer in the United States Navy. His tour of duty gave him abundant material for his collection of short stories (or, in his opinion, novel), *Tales of the South Pacific*, which was published in 1947 and received a Pulitzer Prize the following year. This book did not prove particularly popular as such, although it provided the basis for the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical of 1949, *South Pacific*. Michener's real breakthrough as a historical novelist might be dated from the publication of his massive *Hawaii* in 1959. In addition to gaining its author an

international reputation as a unique novelist, this work set a precedent for his subsequent string of fictional books, not least in terms of its use of “faction”, or fictionalised history incorporating a vast amount of research to create epic proportions. During the next few years, approximately 4 000 000 copies of this work were sold. Its popularity prompted producer Walter Mirisch to pay Michener a reportedly \$600 000 for the film rights to the book. George Roy Hill was hired to direct the production.

Against this background and in light of the fact that *Hawaii* was a Hollywood production from the 1960s, the film’s characterisation of the missionaries in question becomes more comprehensible. In brief, *Hawaii* deals with the initial endeavours of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, a largely Congregationalist organisation, to propagate the Gospel in the monarchy for which the book and the film are named during the early years of the nineteenth century. The film traces this undertaking from its gestation period, when a native of the islands implores fellow divinity students at Yale University to bring Christian salvation to his people through approximately two decades of their often stormy evangelisation to the fulfilment of the first stage of their work, represented by the passing of the torch of ecclesiastical leadership to indigenous hands.

The focal point of *Hawaii* is Abner Hale, a New England Congregationalist minister played by the internationally known Swedish actor Max von Sydow, who does not manage to shed all of his accent and who seems culturally out of place in his rôle. Far more serious than his linguistic incredibility, however, is the almost bizarre characterisation of this character. Early on Hale is depicted in almost farcical terms. After the ABCFM implausibly insists that he take a wife before sailing to Hawaii and arranges for him to meet an eligible young lady in Walpole, New Hampshire, he stumbles through a brief period at the farm where her family of origin resides before managing to overcome his stultifying shyness and insecurity and, with no small amount of prompting from her, proposes marriage. Their initial encounter smacks more of a Marx Brothers slapstick comedy than a serious historical epic. Together with his bride, this nascent missionary, who bears a striking likeness to a stereotypical scarecrow, sail from Boston around Cape Horn to the South Pacific. Convinced of his calling as a representative of the Word of God as the exclusive means of salvation, *en route* Hale foreshadows elements of his subsequent ministry

to the Polynesian inhabitants of Hawaii by evangelising ribald sailors with little success. In the Straits of Magellan, he exhibits his spiritual strength by maintaining his composure when the ship nearly comes to grief during a frightful storm.

Upon reaching Hawaii, Hale immediately finds the sexual mores of its native population, especially as represented graphically on the screen by swarms of bare-breasted young women eagerly swimming out to the sailing ship to serve its sailors as prostitutes, utterly scandalous. No less morally outrageous in his eyes is the practice of sibling marriages in the Hawaiian ruling families. Very little of Hale's actual ministry of evangelisation and church-planting is shown in *Hawaii*; rather, his interaction with the native population rarely extends beyond seemingly endless scenes in which he denounces indigenous concepts of matrimony and fulminating against all hints of residual allegiance to Polynesian deities. Apart from acquiring the language of the people whom he is evangelising, Hale makes no effort to adapt to the local culture. Indeed, even his attire underscores his obdurate clinging to the supposedly narrow-gauged and culturally captive mentality of New England Congregationalism. Even after many years in the tropics, Hale swelters through its warm and humid climate wearing his black parson's frock. He long remains a man almost entirely out of place.

Clearly cut from a less uniformly dreary bolt of cloth is Hale's wife, Jerusha, played no more convincingly by Julie Andrews, perhaps better known during the 1960s for her parts in such films *Mary Poppins* and *The Sound of Music*. As part of the contrived dramatic tension between her and her husband, Jerusha occasionally defends indigenous marital practices and believes that some of the unbaptised natives reflect Christian values more vividly than do many American church members. Her potentially rich rôle remains woefully undeveloped, however, and is dealt a death blow through its diversion into an encounter with a previous suitor, a swash-buckling captain of a whaling vessel played by Richard Harris of *Camelot* fame, who after not seeing Jerusha for years almost miraculously appears on the scene and declares his abiding love for her. After engaging in affection with him, Jerusha remains essentially faithful to her husband until succumbing to an unspecified illness in 1835.

By then her widowed husband has begun to lose a bit of his New England crustiness and, stimulated in part by his witnessing how the native population has

been partly dispossessed of its land by exploitative American imperialists and decimated by imported diseases against which they lack immunity, he sees the folly of having invoked the wrath of God against their folkways and shows signs of tolerating some cultural diversity in the church. The cinematic potential of this *metanoia* remains undeveloped, however, partly because the ABCFM, apparently swayed by the requests of some of its personnel who wish to become sugar cane plantation owners unsullied by Hale's efforts to protect native labour, relieve him of his duties and, congregational polity notwithstanding, direct him to become a parish minister in Connecticut, an historically implausible transfer which Hale refuses in order to remain in Hawaii as an independent clergyman. After more than three hours, *Hawaii* ends quite abruptly when a young Polynesian offers to assist him in his ministry. Despite this ending, the primary impression which Dalton Trumbo's naïve screenplay leaves of missionaries is one of cultural intolerance and religious fanaticism. On the screen the representatives of the ABCFM rarely fly above the low altitude of cardboard characterisation, and they proclaim little more than damnation for the Hawaiians, who in their pre-contact phase are depicted in virtually Edenic circumstances as blissful followers of Kane, the Polynesian "god of love". In terms of both historicity and artistic achievement, therefore, *Hawaii* is a profound disappointment. Its significance for the present study lies essentially in its vivid exemplification of the "missionary as cultural and religious bigot" type of missionary film.

Zulu

Released in 1964, *Zulu* is of the same generation of films as *Hawaii*. Unlike that film, *Zulu* does not focus primarily on missionaries, although two propagators of Christianity play key rôles in this historical epic. In brief, it is a quasi-realistic portrayal of the so-called "Battle of Rorke's Drift" during the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879, a bloody conflagration in which a small detachment of British soldiers stave off repeated attacks by a much larger Zulu force on a Swedish Lutheran mission station near the Buffalo River in northern Natal and, though despite suffering many casualties, are rewarded with no fewer than eleven Victoria Crosses for their feat.

With an international cast encompassing actors ranging from the subsequently renowned Englishman Michael Caine to Mangosuthu Buthelezi (the latter of whom played the cameo rôle of his great-grandfather, Cetshwayo), decades after its release this film retains what eminent South African historian of the Anglo-Zulu War, Professor John Laband of the University of Natal, believes “can only be called its cult following”.⁷

Despite criticism from Laband and other historians, in some respects *Zulu* attains a reasonably high degree of authenticity, at least when gauged by cinematic standards. Encompassing both primary documentation and secondary historiographical studies, a considerable body of literature on the Anglo-Zulu War in general, a significant amount of it pertaining to the battle in question, existed by the early 1960s when English screenwriter John Prebble undertook work on the script. Allowing for virtually inevitable embellishing of certain details and the telescoping of events into the span of an average-length film, as well as what some critics have underscored was a last gasp of chauvinism as the British Empire waned during the 1960s, *Zulu* is in many respects faithful to at least the British elements which it seeks to portray.

The authenticity ends abruptly, however, when Prebble attempted to employ two Swedish missionary characters. Undoubtedly owing to the linguistic barrier and the paucity of reliable material in any language about the Church of Sweden Mission's early endeavours amongst the Zulus, this screenwriter apparently did not pursue serious research on the rôle of that body's personnel in the events bracketing the celebrated battle. Prebble apparently read that the station in question was a Swedish one whose principle missionary was named Otto Witt. He may also have known that Witt had a daughter. Beyond those documentable facts, which could have been gleaned from both nineteenth and twentieth-century English sources, however, Prebble appears to have relied on his fertile imagination and in the process sacrificed historical integrity on the altar of dramatic effect.

The Swedish missionary whom *Zulu* ostensibly portrays was Witt (1848-1924), a pastor's son from Malmö in south-western Sweden who had drunk deeply from the well of the Schartauan pietistic legacy of his region without, apparently, becoming a thoroughgoing pietist. He studied theology at the University of Lund, where he received a degree in that subject in 1873 and completed his training in practical

theology the following year. Witt was then ordained in Lund in 1874 and accepted a temporary call to a pastorate in Malmö. A few months later he became a pastor in Helsingborg, Sweden. In the meantime he had married Elin Pallin, a teacher who was a few weeks older than he and would remain his life-long spouse.

The Witts left Sweden in late January or early February 1876 and reached Natal a few months later. Their first child, named Elin apparently after her mother, was born after the young couple reached the mission field. In 1878 Witt purchased on behalf of the Church of Sweden Mission a farm on which he began to develop a mission station called "Oscarsberg" in honour of the Swedish monarch. It was this site which the British defended only hours after the decimation of their forces at Isandhlwana. At that time Otto Witt was thirty years old and had yet to baptise his first convert. His infant daughter was approximately two.⁸

One would hardly glean these facts from watching *Zulu*. There Witt is played by Jack Hawkins (1910-1973), who was then fifty-three years old, or more than two decades years older than the historical Witt, and certainly looked at least his age in the film. Hawkins had belatedly established his professional reputation playing such fitting military rôles as Major Warden in *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (1957) and General Allenby in *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962).

A much different and but no less severe distortion of history occurs in the portrayal of Elin Witt, the daughter of Otto Witt. In the film her part, the only female European rôle in *Zulu*, is played by the artistically only marginally distinguished but pulchritudinous Swedish actress Ulla Jacobsson (1929-1982), a native of Göteborg whose earlier cinematic career had encompassed films in Sweden and elsewhere in Europe. After beginning on the stage at Göteborg City Theatre in 1948, she had gained notoriety as early as 1951 by playing in what was then regarded as a highly suggestive nude scene in the Swedish film *Hon dansade en sommar*, which was released in Anglophone countries as *One Summer of Happiness*. Perhaps more than any of its counterparts, this film helped to create the international image of Swedish sexual promiscuousness. By 1957 the multilingual Jacobsson had settled in Vienna, where she had been employed on Austrian television and also garnered rôles in Austrian and West German theatrical productions. She married the Austrian ethnologist Hans-Winfried Rohsmann as her third and final husband. They had two children. Jacobsson died of bone cancer in August 1982 at the age of fifty-three

years.⁹ Precisely why at the age of thirty-four she was cast to play the rôle of a two-year-old is impossible to ascertain. Against the backdrop of his severe misunderstanding and irresponsible portrayal of Otto Witt, it seems plausible, of course, that Prebble simply failed to do proper research and did not know anything about the Witt family, even though the most rudimentary facts were readily accessible from standard historical sources in Sweden. On the other hand, it is equally plausible that historical accuracy was not a matter of concern, or that it was subordinated to the financial incentive of creating a rôle for a beautiful, young Swedish actress with an international reputation for salacious performances to enhance the box office appeal of the film. In any case, Ulla Jacobsson was actually slightly older than the historical figure whose daughter she played in *Zulu* but less absurdly, only nineteen years younger than Jack Hawkins, her dramatic father in that film.

The historic European woman conspicuously absent from *Zulu* is Otto Witt's wife, Elin, who accompanied him from Sweden to Natal, gave birth to two children in that colony, and assisted her husband in establishing Oscarsberg. No reference to this musically talented and assiduous female missionary occurs in the film. No explanation, moreover, is given for Elin Witt's absence from its plot. The most plausible inference which uninformed viewers might draw from seeing *Zulu* is that Otto Witt was an ageing, ranting widower in 1879 and that his adult daughter, who understands virtually nothing of Zulu folkways, is merely visiting him at his remote station when the battle erupts. That, of course, is historic nonsense.

With this bizarre representation of the Witt family in the cast, and considering the apparent ignorance of Prebble which underlies it, the deck is arguably stacked against historical accuracy in *Zulu*. Indeed, not only what the Witts are but also most of what they do in the film flies in the face of documentable reality.

Two aspects of Witt's conduct in *Zulu* are sheer fabrications. First, he is depicted as virtually a pacifist who sought as a matter of theological principle to convince the British forces to quit his station. Witt increasingly becomes a thorn in the side of the British commanders as his exhortations to leave counter their intentions to defend the station militarily. "Brothers, oh brothers. The way of the Lord has been shown to us! 'Thou shalt not kill, saith the Lord'. Brothers, oh brothers! God's love is peace", he pleads with a profusion of homiletical gestures. "Go in peace, stay not to kill and be killed. Go, I say". Somehow understanding

his English words and heeding them, many of the Zulus who have been working for the British respond by fleeing. Spurred by the effectiveness of his admonition, Witt turns to the remainder and warns them that “the sin of Cain will be upon you” and reminds them that like Cain, they are their brother’s keeper. A few of the remaining Zulus react by discarding their bandoliers and leaving the scene, to the visible dismay of the commanding officer, Lieutenant Chard. Eventually, Chard orders the meddlesome Witt incarcerated at the station. In one particularly curious wrinkle in the fabric of this, Witt pleads that the Zulu monarch Cetshwayo is “a member of my parish”. In fact, Cetshwayo had not converted to Christianity and there was not yet a parish at Oscarberg, which in any case lay a great distance from the royal kraal at Ulundi.

Both before and after Witt is locked up, he is portrayed as a secret alcoholic who frequently imbibes from a bottle hidden in one of the buildings at Oscarsberg. Assuaging his misery, he becomes increasingly intoxicated until Chard insists that Witt’s daughter drive him away from the station in a horse-drawn buggy. In fact, this Swedish missionary’s quasi-pietistic spirituality did not prevent him from consuming alcoholic beverages and using tobacco on occasion. There is no evidence, however, that Witt had a propensity for the bottle or that he drank spirits on the day of the battle. This contrived element of the film is germane to our analysis merely because it illustrates lucidly how a screenwriter succumbed to the temptation to fabricate this particular foible, which provides an element of irony when juxtaposed with Witt’s apparently uncompromising opposition to the use of violence. It is an almost unsurpassed example of fictitious missionary hypocrisy. Otto Witt thus emerges as a relatively complex but nevertheless stereotypical purveyor of Christianity. He miraculously speaks impeccable English, quotes the Authorised Version of the Bible frequently and perfectly, and behaves in ways which fit popular misconceptions of missionaries but will presumably strike knowledgeable observers as downright bizarre.

Black Robe

To complete this brief survey of the depiction of missionaries and historical episodes of their work in the cinema, we shall look briefly at two films which *The Mission* antedated. The first a Canadian film which appeared five years after *The Mission*, namely *Black Robe*. This work is particularly appropriate, not merely because of its recency but also because it, like *The Mission*, deals with an aspect of the Jesuit endeavour amongst indigenous peoples in the colonial Americas. In this case, however, the venue is Nouvelle France, the French colony in what would become eastern Canada, even though the European characters speak primarily English. Thematically, moreover, *Black Robe* differs markedly from *The Mission* and practically every other film in its sub-genre.

Based on a highly popular novel of the same name by Brian Moore, who also wrote the screenplay, this structurally uncomplicated film traces the journey of a pious young Jesuit priest named Father Laforgue in 1634 up the St Lawrence and Ottawa rivers from Quebec to his order's remote mission station amongst the Hurons. Accompanying him are a band of Algonquians and another young French settler, Daniel, who speaks their language and aspires to the priesthood but soon becomes sexually involved with an attractive woman in the party. These fellow travellers provide convenient foils to Laforgue's conservative religious beliefs and cultural assumptions. It is the tensions between them and Laforgue's efforts to maintain his faith amidst these challenges to his assumptions that provide much of the dramatic moment in this engaging though in places unexciting film.

The zealous Jesuit and his companions set out into the vast wilderness, a trek vividly depicted as a tiny party enveloped by a massive, foreign, and ultimately hostile environment. Within this macrocosm, Laforgue's unseasoned faith is soon put to the test through various means. In one of the earliest challenges to it, he inadvertently witnesses one of the intercourse scenes involving Daniel and his Algonquian girlfriend and finds his own libido aroused. A self-flagellation ritual, complete with Latin *mea culpa*'s, apparently fails to restore his mind to its previous innocence. Absolution, it appears, is imperfect, even for a Jesuit. Not long thereafter, as the party paddles deeper into what Laforgue regards as a heart of spiritual

darkness, other Algonquians, reacting in part to the Europeans' unwillingness to share their personal belongings communally, bring in a dwarf sorcerer to exorcise the priest. Laforgue understands the irony of this ritual, which in his perception is itself is both absurd and demonic. Yet it causes him to realise that his own liturgical ministrations are as meaningless to the Algonquians as theirs are to him.

Black Robe then ascends to a crescendo of violence as Iroquois warriors, rivals of the Algonquians, attack the travelling party, kill most of them in a graphically depicted battle, and capture Laforgue, Daniel, Daniel's lover, and her father. The four prisoners are forced to run the gauntlet and brutally tortured. As part of their ordeal, an Iroquois chief amputates one of Laforgue's fingers with a clam shell and vows that their suffering has merely begun. They manage to flee their captors and avert horrific deaths only after the girl craftily seduces their guard, whom they kill as one stage of their escape.

In the remaining scenes of *Black Robe*, Laforgue's specifically Christian beliefs and practices undergo further challenges. The accompanying Algonquian chief dies of his wounds after the successful flight from captivity; he and his daughter resist the priest's attempts to baptise him shortly before he succumbs. Daniel and the girl then leave him; in parting the aspirant to the priesthood declares that the natural religion of the indigenous peoples, emphasising the rôle of visions in determining behaviour and veneration of ancestral spirits, is at least as valid as the Christianity which is being brought to them. When Laforgue arrives at the Jesuit mission station in the dead of winter, he discovers that its only surviving priest is approaching death. The survival of the Hurons is also in jeopardy. Leaders of the tribe approach Laforgue, demanding in their own terms that he administer baptism to their people as protection from an epidemic, even though they have not converted to Christianity. The solitary young priest, his beliefs eroded and fearing for his own safety, reluctantly consents to compromise the meaning of this sacrament and, in doing so, sacrifice the remnant of integrity of his tattered faith. The film ends on a note of defeat for its tragic protagonist.

The portrayal of this sole missionary in *Black Robe* does not submit to facile categorisation. On the one hand, Laforgue is depicted as a true believer who rarely wavers in his devotion to his cause. He endures great physical hardship for what he assumes is the glory of God and the advancement of God's kingdom. Furthermore,

in the course of the film Laforgue gradually gives up much of his cultural condescension and accepts the indigenes as they are. On the other hand, this priest is a man of the seventeenth century, a pre-Enlightenment figure whose life and ministry reflect his preoccupation with religion. He is an ascetic man who prays and reads the Bible frequently while sojourning through a brief life in this world preparing for eternity in the next. Laforgue is thus as strange to his pleasure-tolerating and sexually less restrained contemporaries in the North American forest as he presumably is to those viewers of *Black Robe* in a secularised era three and a half centuries later whose axiological frameworks leave little room for devotees of religion who believe that their calling is to propagate their beliefs amongst supposedly benighted *sauvages*.

Black Robe is to some extent preoccupied with Laforgue's inner struggle to retain his personal faith and sense of purpose, but for contextual purposes we must consider at least briefly the political and cultural dimensions of the ethnic relations involved. In an implicit sense, this film embodies imperialism, of course; it deals with one dimension, the religious one, of French intrusion into eastern and central Canada. There is a very limited amount of resistance thereto by the indigenous peoples, but *Black Robe* actually tells less about this than it describes hostilities between the Iroquois and the Algonquians. There are no clear-cut lines of demarcation separating heroes from villains in this film; the characters, though not particularly complex, are not one-dimensional embodiments of vice or virtue, either. Far more evident in the macrocosm of *Black Robe* is the clash of cultures which cannot be readily harmonised. The indigenes are fascinated by a European clock but nevertheless declare that the French settlers are not intelligent. The latter, meanwhile, proclaim the sanctity of private ownership of property, whereas among the Algonquians tribal sharing is the rule. Even the music and rituals of the two groups refuse to mesh.

Finally, since *Black Robe* is ultimately about missions, one must address the question about their viability in an utterly hostile environment, their rôle in imperialism generally, or relations between missionaries and conquerors. An epilogue printed across the screen at the end of the film informs viewers that the Hurons near the Jesuit mission were converted to Catholicism but eventually fell victim to the Iroquois, who exterminated their settlement. This arguably testifies to the efficacy of the missionaries in question who, however, remain anonymous. *Black*

Robe tells us nothing about what transpired between Laforgue's accession to the Huron leaders' demand for "water sorcery" and the conversion of their people. Were the Hurons in any way compelled to accept Christianity? Did the Jesuits or other missionaries weaken the resistance of the indigenous peoples to imperial conquest? For answers to these vital questions, one must look elsewhere. *Black Robe* is primarily about religious, psychological, and anthropological matters; it does not represent an attempt to depict problems in the realm of social ethics.

At Play in the Fields of the Lord

The final film which we shall consider is set in South America during the twentieth century but has little in common with *The Mission*. *At Play in the Fields of the Lord*, which Universal Studios released in 1991, is based on the novel of the same name by the American writer, naturalist, and amateur ethnologist Peter Matthiessen, who marshalled his personal experience in the Amazon Basin when writing that book, which was published in 1965. Few if any commercial works for the cinema have ever incorporated as many missiological issues as *At Play in the Fields of the Lord*, and in this work several of them appear to be there quite consciously. Among the most prominent of these is multiple stereotyping of missionaries, as several different kinds of them are pitted against each other to create much of the dramatic tension.

In brief, the film explores the confrontation of a Stone Age indigenous tribe in Amazonian eastern Peru with both Protestant missionaries and mercenaries from the United States. The two private soldiers of fortune in question initially accept an assignment from a Peruvian governmental official to intimidate through aerial bombardment the recalcitrant indigenes into abandoning an area which he wishes to exploit economically, but one of the two mercenaries, who is a Native American, feels some affinity with these remote ethnic brethren and joins them instead. At the same time, a zealous and culturally insensitive missionary who has been working for their conversion to his evangelical form of Christianity in a kerygmatic mode is joined by a new colleague from the United States who questions his methods and begins to show both interest in and respect for the folkways and religious beliefs

of this Amazonian tribe. This sets up an element of dramatic tension between these two American missionaries.

The details of the somewhat complicated plot and prolix narrative need not concern us here. What is of particular contextual relevance to the present study is Matthiessen's creation of various missionary types both to embody the conflicting interests and positions which interact to create clashes of various kinds. Leslie Huben, the senior male missionary, is an archetypical American evangelical. A former sports hero, he is utterly self-assured and confident of his calling to evangelise the Niaruna. The brash Huben evinces no respect for these people, their culture in general, or their traditional religious beliefs and practices. He is quite willing to co-operate with the Peruvian government in intimidating the tribal people to whom he feels called to proclaim salvation in Jesus Christ. His pulchritudinous wife is cast only partly in the same mould. She quietly supports his loud-mouthed ranting and heavy-handed tactics without actively engaging in them herself. Unfortunately, this initially plausible and potentially well-developed character is compromised by implausible scenes in which she bathes nude and befriends one of the egregiously crude American mercenaries. Huben's younger colleague, Martin Quarrier, arrives in Peru after serving as a missionary to Native Americans. His wife and their young son accompany him. Quarrier is also a man of sturdy evangelical faith, but unlike his senior fellow he soon becomes interested in Niaruna folkways. Eventually, he develops considerable respect for their religion as well and abandons his erstwhile belief that evangelical Christianity alone leads to divine salvation. Unlike Huben, moreover, this neophyte foreign missionary rejects the violence which the Peruvian government is willing to inflict on the Niaruna. Quarrier's physically and emotionally unattractive wife, Hazel, is virtually his antipodes in several respects. She rejects the indigenous people entirely and does not want their son to interact with them. Moreover, Hazel suffers from culture shock and desires to return to the familiarity of a rural setting in the United States, a wish which apparently is fulfilled after their son dies in Peru. Her animosity to Roman Catholicism also comes to the fore repeatedly.

Matthiessen, a devotee of Zen Buddhism, has no obligation to Christianity, and in both the novel *At Play in the Fields of the Lord* and other written works his explicit comments about Christians are generally not words of praise, although he occasionally lauded what he apparently believed were exceptional cases. What

is impressive in the film at hand, however, is how effectively he and its other creators employed this assortment of quite imperfectly drawn characters to cast light on the missiological issues stated above. For the student of missions, *At Play in the Fields of the Lord* is thus a potentially quite valuable work of cinematic art. For viewers interested in discovering what kinds of people American Protestant foreign missionaries tend to be, however, this film offers far more caricatures than realism.

The Inn of the Sixth Happiness

As indicated earlier, the tendency of filmmakers to caricature foreign missionaries as cultural imperialists, hypocrites, or otherwise unsavoury characters has been widespread but by no means universal. One prominent exception to this generalisation is *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness*, which was based on *The Small Woman* by Alan Burgess, a biography of Gladys Aylward (1903-1970), a long-term English missionary to China. Certain aspects of Aylward's life unquestionably lent themselves to dramatisation. Initially a domestic servant in her native city of London whose formal education ended when she was fourteen, she felt called to participate in the rapidly expanding evangelisation of the Chinese. This was after working for retired missionaries in Bristol. Consequently, in 1930 Aylward used nearly all her meagre savings in 1930 to purchase a ticket on the Trans-Siberian Railway to Tientsin in northern China. The journey was complicated by hostilities between the Soviet Union and China which compelled her to travel via Japan. Upon reaching Tientsin, where she knew no-one, Aylward contacted the Anglo-Chinese College¹⁰, whose principal arranged for her to join an elderly Scottish woman, Jeannie Lawson, at a missionary outpost at Yangcheng in Southern Shansi. There Aylward spent much of the 1930s mastering the local dialect, adjusting to such local customs as public beheadings of convicted felons, and assisting Lawson in administering a small inn for travellers. When Japanese forces invaded that region of China in 1938, she fled with a column of approximately 100 Chinese children under her wing, eventually leading them to safety after an arduous trek over mountainous terrain. During the war Aylward assisted the Nationalist Chinese through espionage and by tending to wounded soldiers. The Maoist takeover of China and subsequent of foreign

missionaries in the late 1940s prompted her to return briefly to England, but she resumed her mission to the Chinese in the 1950s by managing an orphanage on Taiwan.

Released by Twentieth-Century Fox in 1958, *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness* expresses considerably more respect for missionaries than most of the other films considered in this study, no doubt owing in large measure to its reliance on Burgess' almost hagiographic biography. Though clearly sentimental and apparently romanticised in places, however, the film offers a generous measure of realism. The latter element is immediately compromised, however, by the idiosyncratic casting. The diminutive and aesthetically undistinguished Aylward is played by the statuesque and beautiful Swedish actress Ingrid Bergman, while the German actor Curt Jürgens takes the part of Captain Lin Nan, a Eurasian officer in the Chinese army with whom Aylward becomes romantically involved.

Although this film was not intended to explore missiological issues in depth, it nevertheless touches on several of them. One, of course, is missionary motivation; another closely related matter is the question of formal qualifications for foreign missionary service. In Britain, Aylward's ability to serve effectively abroad is questioned when she first presents herself, but presumably to the delight of many viewers she proves her mettle in abundance after arriving in the field. The involvement of missionaries in social reform (including *inter alia* Aylward's predictable opposition to the Chinese practice of foot-binding) comes to the fore at times, as does, though partly obliquely, missionary participation in military conflict. Perhaps the most compelling overarching missiological theme of *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness*, however, is the effectiveness of social ministry, broadly defined, as a means of propagating Christianity.

Notes

1. Dean Rapp and Charles W. Weber, "British Film, Empire and Society in the Twenties: the 'Livingstone' film, 1923-1925", *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, IX, no. 1 (1989), p. 3.
2. Henry Walton, *Livingstone, Fifty Years After - the story of the film expedition* (London: Hutchinson, 1925).
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 3-15.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
5. Dorothy Hammond and Alta Jablow, *The Africa That Never Was: Four Centuries of British Writing about Africa* (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1970).
6. W. Somerset Maugham, *A Writer's Notebook* (London: William Heinemann, 1949), pp. 104-106.
7. Frederick Hale Private Archives, *Zulu* file, John Laband (Pietermaritzburg) to Frederick Hale, 16 March 1995.
8. Little has been published about Witt. The most comprehensive description of the man and his career as a missionary is unquestionably Frederick Hale, "The Missionary Career and Spiritual Odyssey of Otto Witt", Doctor of Philosophy thesis, University of Cape Town, 1991.
9. "Ulla Jacobsson död", *Dagens Nyheter* (Stockholm), 24 August 1982, p. 18; "100 miljoner människor såg henne i filmsuccén", *Göteborgs-Posten*, 24 August 1982, p. 35.
10. This is the same institution where the renowned Scottish Olympic athlete and missionary Eric Liddell (whose feat in winning the gold medal in the 400 metre dash at the 1924 Olympic Games after declining to run in the 100 metre event because the preliminary heats were held on a Sunday was featured in the film *Chariots of Fire*) taught.

CHAPTER SEVEN

PIVOTAL IMPLICATIONS OF LIBERATION THEOLOGY

As we have emphasised in previous chapters, a pivotal theme in the present study is that since the eighteenth century *littérateurs* and film-makers have repeatedly shaped their depictions of missionaries and missionary endeavours to serve contemporary causes which they were advocating. Among these have been the campaign to suppress the Society of Jesus, subsequent efforts to legalise that religious order, anti-imperialism, and opposition to fascism. The film *The Mission* is no exception. Screenwriter Robert Bolt and director Roland Joffé, although unquestionably fascinated by the episode in Jesuit history which they were portraying, sought to accentuate its contemporary relevance by explicitly linking elements in this film to the plight of the Roman Catholic Church *vis-à-vis* political and economic power structures in Latin America during the 1980s. Neither man was by any stretch of the imagination a theologian or even particularly religious in a conventional sense, and neither is known to have had noteworthy training in any theological discipline. Nevertheless, it is indisputable that both Bolt and Joffé employed *The Mission* as a means of casting light on parallels between eighteenth-century Jesuit missions history and liberation theology of their own day. During the mid-1980s, when this film was being created, liberation theology was moving from the rarified atmosphere of ecclesiastical debate into the arena of public conflict and becoming relatively well-known to millions of Christians in South and North America as well as Europe as some of its exponents, perhaps most notably the Brazilian Franciscan theologian Leonardo Boff, were crossing verbal swords with Pope John Paul II in doctrinal duels which were covered in the international broadcast and print media. Given the coincidence of the film with this controversy, it is not at all surprising that *The Mission* became a minor participant in the struggle.

As comprehensive surveys of liberation theology have been published in several languages, it would be not only unrealistic but also superfluous to attempt one here. In the present chapter, therefore it is our modest intention merely to establish part of the background for the tendentiousness in *The Mission* by briefly describing the

origins and central thrust of liberation theology, illustrating the agonising issue of the legitimacy or illegitimacy of violence with which some liberation theologians have wrestled since the 1970s by focussing on the positions which certain representative Latin American Christians have taken, and considering the public nature of the widely publicised international controversy which pitted certain liberationists squarely against more conservative theologians in the Vatican and elsewhere.

The Genesis and Character of Liberation Theology

As many commentators have emphasised, liberation theology means various things in varying contexts. In its classical Latin American formulation, which is particularly germane to the present study, it stems in large measure from the woeful incompleteness of movements towards political, social, and economic freedom in what were Spanish and Portuguese colonies from Chile and Argentina to Mexico from the late fifteenth until the nineteenth century. During this age of grand Iberian imperialism, an agrarian society developed which to a great degree mirrored the economic structure which obtained in much of Europe from the Middle Ages until at least the Napoleonic era and in some countries until the dawn of the Industrial Revolution. Wealthy landowners ruled vast *haciendas* largely unfettered by any effective, independent judiciary, often with the support of colonial officials. Impoverished Native Americans, *mestizos*, and imported African slaves, meanwhile, comprised much of the labour force, living under conditions similar to those which had characterised the life of serfs in medieval Europe. These workers, of course, were landless and virtually indigent, a rural proletariat without a political voice, social status, or noteworthy worldly possessions. Other tribal peoples, such as the Guaraní, suffered precipitous declines in numbers as technically more advanced colonists captured their lands, introduced diseases against which immunity had not evolved locally, and forced them into servitude in unsanitary conditions. The Roman Catholic Church became firmly established throughout Latin America (an oft-criticised appellation which effectively relates the position of the ecclesiastical establishment and the European origins of the ruling class but says of course nothing about the

indigenous culture of the masses) and, owing largely to the indefatigable efforts of thousands of particularly Jesuit and Franciscan missionaries, gained at least the nominal loyalty of most of the people and held a virtual monopoly on Christian religious life throughout the region until the twentieth century. Generally speaking, the Church of Rome did little to challenge the economic and political *status quo* during this period. To be sure, one can point to such exceptions as Bartolomé de Las Casas, the celebrated defender of Native Americans, but their voices were like one crying in the wilderness of continuing racial oppression and deeply entrenched economic exploitation. Independence from Spanish and Portuguese hegemony came after 1800, but nominal national autonomy did not significantly change the macrocosmic economic structure or transfer the reins of political power from the hands of the privileged landowners to those of the ethnically disparate working class. Poverty, dictatorships, disease, illiteracy, and other signs of the medieval legacy of colonial rule thus remained fairly widespread throughout Central and South America long after the Spanish and Portuguese flags were lowered and the countries of the region nominally joined the global community of nations. Compounding the frustration of the dispirited peasantry, the armies of one Latin American country after another have drawn their officer corps from the ranks of the ruling classes and consequently regarded the defence of the *status quo* as one of their central missions.

Inevitably, movements sprang up hither and yon to challenge this backward and oppressive system. Perhaps most notably and successfully, after waging guerrilla warfare for several years, Ché Guevara and Fidel Castro led a campaign which overthrew the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista in Cuba and established a Marxist regime on that "Pearl of the Antilles". This revolution caught the attention of much of the world, including that of the neophyte British playwright and screenwriter Robert Bolt, and inspired revolutionaries throughout much of Latin America. It inspired movements elsewhere in the Western Hemisphere, such as that which brought a socialist government to Chile in 1970, a short-lived episode which fell victim to a military coup led by Augusto Pinochet three years later. Near the end of the 1970s, a socialist revolution brought about a changing of the old guard in Nicaragua. In other corners of the Latin American political scene during that period, political turmoil alternated with continuing dictatorships, often led or supported by military

establishments, in a tragic drama in which the landless peasantry remained perennial victims. Meanwhile, continuing high birth rates combined with the inadequacy of the rural economies to support rapidly growing populations fuelled rampant urbanisation. Such attendant social woes as spiralling rates of unemployment, substandard housing, crime, chemical dependency, and violence compounded the tribulation of the masses. Not until the 1980s did noteworthy political reform occur in several countries, and even then it was sporadic and failed to address sufficiently the underlying issue of unabated massive poverty.

Outside the political arena, indeed, necessarily so, given the *de facto* monopoly which oligarchies held on political power in many Latin American countries, other voices called for reforms through a variety of channels. In rural areas of Brazil, for example, Paulo Freire launched his eventually internationally known programme of adult literacy as one means of empowering people to gain some measure of control over their lives. His efforts were emulated in Hispanic countries of South America. In urban areas, trade union movements also proliferated, although in many cases they were long ineffective. In tandem with such activities, student groups, some of them specifically Roman Catholic, organised educational programmes for adults, arranged political forums to conscientise the public, and otherwise sought to nurture the germination of the seeds of reform. In many cases, these efforts were made under the banner of Marxism. Correctly perceiving threats to the *status quo* in these burgeoning kinds of activities, conservative governments, often with the explicit support of both the Roman Catholic hierarchy and North American Protestant missionaries who feared that eventual Marxist governments would curtail their freedom, as indeed had happened in Castro's Cuba, sought to undermine them through legal and extralegal means. Trade union officials, members of the clergy, student leaders, and others were harassed, arrested, prosecuted, or simply "disappeared".

What came to be called liberation theology was born in this crucible of exploitation, oppression, frustration, and, to some extent, ecclesiastical co-operation with the ruling classes and dictatorial governments. One particularly important root of the movement was the formation of "basic ecclesial communities", *i.e.* local groups of Roman Catholics, generally under the leadership of lay people, who

gathered to study the Bible, worship, discuss their spiritual and secular lives, and promote mutual assistance. This was a widespread reaction against what many had experienced as passive religion with little day-to-day relevance in the formal church. Another vital root lay in Christian student movements at Latin American universities during the 1960s. Many middle-class students became politically conscientised and began to examine more rigorously than had hitherto been the case their own complicity, and that of their generally politically conservative Roman Catholic churches in the region, in structures which helped to maintain intense social stratification and massive poverty. At the same time, some of the clergy, both Catholic and Protestant, became convinced not only that much of the theology which they had learnt was of little relevance to the lives of the impoverished but also that Christianity was doing virtually nothing to encourage and guide a major change of their status. To some theologians, moreover, it seemed increasingly obvious that conventional theology was not only irrelevant in this regard but that it was imbued with conservative elements which actively contributed to the maintenance of oppressive social and political systems.

Liberation theologians, convinced that classical Roman Catholic doctrine, including much moral theology, was failing to address what they perceived as the reality of life for the impoverished masses to whom many of them were ministering, thus began what the most radical of them regarded as a de-ideologising and general rewriting of theology. This included, *inter alia*, interpreting the Gospel from radically different perspectives incorporating fundamentally different premises. First, they sought to view reality from the viewpoint of the dispossessed. Secondly, many reversed the point of departure in classical theology by beginning not with what had long been accepted as basic tenets of the faith but with the praxis of the people. In other words, first consideration was given to analysis of social conditions (in some cases employing Marxist categories), and only then, in the light of this, would one turn to such exercises in reflective theology as Biblical interpretation. Not all liberation theologians, it should be emphasised, have taken this approach; some Catholics and Protestants, such as Juan Luis Segundo and José Miguez Bonino, have begun with prevailing orthodox theology but sought to transform it to make it more relevant to contemporary social concerns. Segundo has stressed what he

terms the “hermeneutical circle” of ongoing interaction between Biblical texts and their interpretation in differing times and in varying contexts. This acknowledges that changes in individual and societal situations, such as massive inequalities in living conditions, inevitably make an impact on the way people read and interpret Scripture.¹ Thirdly, pivotal emphasis was placed on not merely inculcating doctrines but applying Christian ethical principles to the struggle for the liberation of the oppressed; hence the popular designation “liberation theology”. Some, like the Uruguayan Jesuit Segundo, have argued that this term is inauspicious and misleading, because it gives the false impression that the chief aim of the new theological direction is to create a political agenda or social and economic liberation the focal point of Christian theology in general.² Nevertheless, it is beyond dispute that many liberation theologians have placed great emphasis on the implications of Christianity for contributing to the dismantling through either violent or nonviolent means of oppressive social structures.

The Inescapable Issue of the Legitimacy of Violence

It must be emphasised, however, that liberation theologians have never spoken with one voice on the issue of the legitimacy of employing violence in seeking to cast off the shackles of oppression. Their discord in this regard is hardly surprising when one considers that for nearly 2 000 years Christians have been unable to marshal a united front on the issue of whether it is morally defensible to perform military service. In the first century, the Roman observer Celsus criticised Christians for refusing to serve in the imperial army, but before the end of the fourth century Christianity was the official religion of the Roman Empire and all its soldiers were thus at least nominal followers of Jesus Christ. Generally speaking, members of most Christian denominations have had few qualms about military service as such; the so-called historic “peace churches”, such as the Society of Friends, the Church of the Brethren, and various Mennonite denominations, stand out as anomalies in this broad concession to participation in violent means of coping with international and domestic strife. Within the Roman Catholic Church, pacifism has always held

at best a minority position, while the doctrine of the “just war”, stemming in part from Augustine, has long been official teaching.

For liberation theologians, the question of using violence has been particularly thorny and indeed ironic. On the one hand, they have repeatedly called attention to the use of structural violence and the co-operation of military establishments in maintaining the oppressive *status quo*. On the other hand, many advocates of liberation theology have also emphasised the ostensible futility of effecting notable social and political change through nonviolent means and thus believe that taking up the sword is, relatively speaking, a morally defensible alternative.

Bellwether liberation theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez broached the matter of violence as an inevitable historical phenomenon without explicitly advocating its use at least as early as 1970. In his frequently quoted essay “Notes for a Theology of Liberation”, he asserted that “Latin America will never get out of its plight except by a profound transformation, a social revolution that will radically change the conditions it lives in at present”. Owing to the prevalence of “Marxist inspiration” among revolutionary minds throughout the region, this young priest declared, “this liberation will have to pass, sooner or later, through paths of violence”. To Gutiérrez, it was no longer a question of either whether or when: “Indeed, we recognize that the armed struggle began some years ago”. He reserved opinion about both its ethical defensibility and its utilitarian worth, noting that at that time “it is hard to weigh its possibilities in terms of political effectiveness”. Gutiérrez conceded that “the reverses it [*i.e.* the armed struggle] has suffered have obliged it to rethink its program”, but he added that “it would be naive to think that the armed struggle is over”.³

Gutiérrez briefly touched the issue again in his study of *The Power of the Poor in History* but again failed to give it its due. There he stated that “we cannot say that violence is all right when the oppressor uses it to maintain or preserve ‘order’ but wrong when the oppressed use it to overthrow this same ‘order’”.⁴ These are isolated passages in the large *corpus* of Gutiérrez’ literary output, however, which do not add up to a general endorsement of violence, notwithstanding the criticism which many theologians in Latin America and elsewhere have levelled at their liberationist counterparts, not least Gutiérrez, as advocates of it.

Similar ambivalence has appeared in the works of other liberation theologians. Chilean Pablo Richard, for example, while serving as a theological educator in Costa Rica in the late 1970s, pointed out that at one stage of the Exodus Moses ordered the Levites to put idolaters amongst the Israelites to death and remarked that “processes of liberation are always violent, not only to the oppressor, but also to the oppressed, who must undergo an internal transformation to liberate themselves from their oppressed and alienated consciousness”. In a related vein, he could write approvingly in a commentary on the Book of Maccabees that under the hegemony which Antiochus had imposed the oppressed nation of Israel “could profess its faith in God only by violent struggle against . . . domination and idolatry”.⁵ But even Richard stopped short of directly advocating violence as a means of attempting to promote social justice in Latin America.

Hélder Câmara’s Qualified Endorsement of Violence

In the meantime, Hélder Pessoa Câmara, the archbishop of Olinda and Recife in north-eastern Brazil, had directly addressed the issue of violence in the late 1960s, although his response to it is hardly a model of unambiguous expository clarity. To this senior cleric, whose name would become among the best known in liberationist circles internationally, the ongoing “semifeudal” socio-economic structure of Latin America served to illustrate his belief that not only that region but indeed “the whole world is in need of a structural revolution”. Latin American Christians, Câmara averred, should not be content to effect superficial political and educational reforms, however pressing those might be. Instead, they should set as their goal a total restructuring of society which would end the “subhuman condition of real slavery” in which untold millions of people lived their lives. The unresolved issue, he believed, was essentially whether the revolution “necessarily presupposes that violence be exercised at times, even unconsciously, by the same people who condemn it as a plague on society”. Câmara refused to condemn those who answered this question affirmatively but chided those who, in his perception, oversimplified it. “It is easy to speak about violence when it is a question of condemning it from

afar”, he noted, “without identifying it, distinguishing its various types, or analyzing its deeper causes; or of praising it from afar, in the manner of a living room Ché Guevara”. Though expressing strongly his abhorrence of brutality, he thought it fully comprehensible “why people think, talk, and act in terms of liberating or redeeming violence”.⁶ Precisely which “people” he had in mind, however, he did not specify.

Câmara sought to spell out his own position on the matter. It was a textbook case of inconsistency. On the one hand, he praised “those who, in conscience, feel obliged to opt for violence, not the easy violence of the guerrillas of the living room, but the violence of those who have proved their sincerity by the sacrifice of their lives”. Numbering among these heroes Camilo Torres, a Colombian priest who joined a militant revolutionary movement and died fighting the government of Colombia, and Ché Guevara, Câmara thought their memory “merits as much respect as that of the Reverend Martin Luther King”. His comparison is especially ironic, given King’s commitment to effecting social reform through Gandhian and other forms of passive resistance. Turning to himself, however, Câmara insisted that as a “pilgrim of peace” and a follower of Pope Paul VI he could not participate in violence. He declared succinctly: “Personally, I would prefer a thousand times to be killed than to kill”. He briefly delineated the Biblical foundation of his position as resting on the concept of love as expressed in the Gospel, most notably in the Beatitudes. Without stating unambiguously whether he placed practitioners of violence outside the pale of Christianity, Câmara emphasised that “we Christians are on the side of nonviolence, which is a choice neither of weakness nor of passivity. Nonviolence is believing in a higher power than the power of war, of death, and of hate - it is believing in the power of truth, justice, and love”.⁷

One of the principal deficiencies in Câmara’s provocative and in places boldly worded essay is that he fails to address directly certain questions which form the axis of Christian moral theology around which the subject rotates. Among these, as already indicated, is whether it is morally defensible for Christians in general to employ violence in specific situations and whether in such cases the ends justify these means. This archbishop insists that “we Christians” take the side of nonviolence, but at the same time he refuses to condemn the opposite position. Where,

if anywhere, does he draw the line? Does he allow for exceptions to the ideals expressed in the Beatitudes? Related to this, it is striking that a man occupying a position of enormous responsibility in the Roman Catholic Church failed to link his position to that of the official teachings of that body. Câmara's truncated mentioning of the American Baptist civil rights advocate Martin Luther King also calls attention to his failure to deal with the obvious alternative of passive resistance and other conventional nonviolent means of attempting to effect reform. This *lacuna* in his argument leaves one wondering whether Câmara believed that these avenues were no longer open or whether he thought they had been travelled and found not to lead to the desired goal of meaningful liberation of the masses.

When in 1974 Câmara received a doctorate *honoris causa* from Harvard University in recognition of his indefatigable advocacy of civil rights in Brazil, he admitted that optimism and pessimism co-existed in his soul and that they came to the fore when he considered the place of law in modern societies. He delivered an address titled "The Force of Right, or the Right of Force?" The term "law", the honorary doctorand observed, was becoming a "hollow word, resonant but empty", because the world was "increasingly dominated by force, by violence, by fraud, by injustice, by avarice - in a word, by egoism". He catalogued various judicial categories, *e.g.* constitutional, agrarian, and civil law, noting how in each case oppressive governments either exploited them to serve oligarchical interests or apparently perceived themselves as not subservient to the law. The pessimist within Câmara tentatively concluded: "If Law always ends up having to appeal to force, why not close at once the schools of law and open schools of war [?]" But this dauntless Christian refused to concede defeat on the basis of his worldly observations. His fundamental belief in God as Creator and Father, he emphasised no less pointedly, coupled with his conviction that the revelation of God in Jesus Christ and the divine plan of salvation which included *inter alia* the presence of the Holy Spirit to "make the human mind fruitful", gave him hope and reason to conclude that the human race was not incorrigibly lost. Câmara revealed that part of his hope for fragmented humanity lay in his search for young leaders who were capable of building bridges between disparate groups of people without homogenising them. All in all, his attitude on this occasion was apparently less resigned to the

acceptance of the employment of violence on the part of revolutionaries and more disposed to the viability of evolutionary change. Yet Câmara did not openly condemn or champion violent means at that time.⁸

Néstor Paz as Christian Guerrilla

A South American Catholic whose faith prompted him to take up the sword during this period was Néstor Paz, whose name is still occasionally associated with the link between liberation theology and revolutionary movements. Born in poverty-stricken Bolivia in 1945, he escaped the indigence of most of his compatriots by being the son of a general in the armed forces who eventually became the governor of Sucre. Néstor was reared squarely in the Roman Catholic tradition and attended a Jesuit college in his hometown. At age fourteen he entered a minor seminary, and three years later he began a novitiate with the Redemptorist Fathers in Córdoba, Argentina. Continuing his international migration, Paz transferred to the major seminary in Santiago, Chile, to study theology from 1963 until 1966. This young Christian terminated his theological education, however, to take up the study of medicine in La Paz, Bolivia, in 1967, but this too was short-lived and did not lead to a professional qualification. Instead, Paz married a fellow student, Cecelia ("Cecy") Avila, and the young couple became revolutionaries who sought to mesh their Christian faith with Marxism. In the cauldron of Latin American student activism of the late 1960s, Paz took his inspiration from a variety of sources which included *inter alia* the New Testament, the life of Saint Francis of Assisi, and the works of the late Ché Guevara, who had been captured and executed while participating in a revolutionary struggle in Bolivia in 1967.

Paz joined a liberationist movement called the *Ejército de Liberación Nacional*. This group sought to overthrow the military *junta* of General Alfredo Ovando, who had seized power in 1969. Paz took the *nom de guerre* "Francisco" after his supposed model, the saint of Assisi. Less than three months after joining the "Teoponte Campaign" of the ELN and participating in rural guerrilla warfare against government troops, however, he died of starvation. In the meantime, the idealistic young militant

recorded his views on the relationship of Christian faith to participation in revolutionary war in a diary and in letters to his wife.⁹

Written during a guerrilla campaign, Paz's jottings testify to his intelligence and the strength of his convictions, but they do not by any means constitute a carefully limned theological treatise. Instead, they reflect his sentiments during a time of bitter conflict. Paz understood the social and political system against which he was fighting to be entirely exploitative and regarded it as the antithesis of an order which could be harmonised with God's intention for Creation. At the heart of his perception lay his awareness of the screaming social inequalities throughout Latin America. Given this extreme stratification, no tranquillity could be possible. Referring to Isaiah 58 as a *locus classicus* relating peace to social justice, Paz declared that "peace is the result of love among people, the result of an end to exploitation". He took to task ostensibly pietistic souls who condemned revolutions and activism, especially if by doing so they lent tacit or explicit support to the *status quo*. "We cannot sit and spend long hours reading the Gospel with cardinals, bishops, and pastors, all of whom are doing fine right where they are, while the flock wanders about in hunger and solitude", Paz explained. "These persons, sadly, are today's Pharisees". He and his comrades, he was convinced, by contrast stood squarely on the side of divine righteousness. Paraphrasing John 15:13, Paz wrote, "Greater love than this no man has than to lay down his life for his friends". This justified the course of action he and his confederates had taken: "For this reason we have taken up arms: to defend the unlettered and undernourished majority from the exploitation of a minority and to win back dignity for a dehumanized people".¹⁰

Paz expressed equal certitude about where God stood on the matter of armed liberation. "They say violence is not evangelical; let them remember Yahweh slaying the first-born of the Egyptians to free his people from exploitation", he thundered. Expanding the point, Paz dismissed "the languid faces of the over-pious" as irrelevant to the reality he faced. It demanded unambiguous action, and he apparently had little doubt about the general course this must take: "Conversion implies first an inner violence which is then followed by violence against the exploiter". In one of many undeveloped assertions, Paz characterised this participation in armed resistance to the oppressors as being "rooted in the prophetic line of Salvation

History". In another, he summarily dismissed alternative modes of action, asserting without elaboration that "taking up arms is the only effective way of protecting the poor against their present exploitation, the only effective way of generating a free man". Therefore, Paz wrote metaphorically in an allusion to Jesus Christ visiting the Temple in Jerusalem, "the whip of justice, so often betrayed by elegant gentlemen, will fall on the exploiter, that false Christian who forgets that the force of the Lord ought to drive him to liberate his neighbor from sin, that is to say, from every lack of love".¹¹

Taking his case a crucial step further, Paz insisted that the armed struggle was not an option but an obligation for Christians. Citing Camilo Torres, he wrote that "the duty of every Christian is to be a revolutionary. The duty of every revolutionary is to bring about the revolution" and concluded in eschatological terms that the choice was between "Victory of Death".¹²

Leonardo Boff's Opposition to Violence

The position which Leonardo Boff took on the issue of the legitimacy of violence in the campaign for liberation a few years before *The Mission* was produced is particularly relevant to our survey because he subsequently stood at the centre of the public controversy over liberation theology which was raging while Joffé and Bolt were completing their preparations for that film. Furthermore, Boff's stance differed markedly from those of men like Paz and Richard. In considering his writing on the subject, it should be kept in mind that Boff was an heir of the Franciscan tradition and that this presumably wielded an influence on his perception of the matter.

For our purposes, an essay which Boff wrote in the late 1970s titled "Christ's Liberation via Oppression: An Attempt at Theological Construction from the Standpoint of Latin America" is quite illustrative. There he adopted imitative ethics as his point of departure. Boff emphasised that Jesus offered a nonviolent example of redemptive suffering. Although he "was the Son of God, he did not make use of divine power, which is capable of altering every situation" but transcended this

seemingly facile way of coping with his enemies. Because “power as domination” was foreign to his divine nature and it “produces both oppression and obstacles to communion”, Jesus chose instead to bear “witness to the real power of God: love”. Ultimately God’s love “rules out all violence and oppression, even for the sake of having love itself prevail”. Furthermore, to have engaged in violence would have been counterproductive, because “the apparent efficacy of violence does not in fact manage to break the spiralling process of violence”. Boff did not elaborate on these points in this essay, but he encouraged readers to imitate Jesus and accept the inevitability of suffering while continuing to work for a just social order. “Death is accepted and incorporated into the project of the just person and the true prophet”, he declared. They can and must count on it. The greatness of Jesus lies in the fact that he did not take the easy way out when he was faced with opposition and condemnation”.¹³

Two Divergent Latin American Protestant Voices

Protestant churches have proliferated rapidly in Latin America during the twentieth century, and theologians in them have participated in the debate about liberation theology, particularly the question of the legitimacy of violence as an instrument for effecting social change. Like their Roman Catholic counterparts, they have not spoken univocally on this issue. We shall consider briefly the positions taken on the question of how Christians should work for radical social change by two prominent Protestants, Samuel Escobar and José Míguez Bonino, to highlight the divergence of opinion in their ranks.

A Peruvian by birth who settled in Córdoba, Argentina, Escobar served in the secretariat of the conservative International Fellowship of Evangelical Students and as president of the Latin American Theological Fraternity. He was active in the Lausanne Movement beginning in the early 1970s. Like many other young delegates to the International Congress on World Evangelization in Lausanne in July 1974, Escobar sought to call attention to the centrality of Christian social action to the Gospel. In a key address to the Congress which has become a minor classic

in the area of evangelical social ethics, he underscored that the popular perception of social renewal as incompatible with evangelisation rested on a false dichotomy. On the contrary, Escobar insisted, since the apostolic era the new humanity and community of faith to which Christianity gives birth have issued a clarion call for a different approach to economics, slavery, and other matters. Faithful to his theological moorings, he emphasised that “the simple liberation from human masters is not the freedom of which the gospel speaks”, but he added with equal emphasis that “the heart which has been made free with the freedom of Christ cannot be indifferent to the human longings for deliverance from economic, political, or social oppression”.¹⁴

Escobar certainly did not advocate violence in this speech. Instead, he argued that Christians could effect noteworthy social change through peaceful means. As one example, he cited the decision of the Canadian Baptist Mission Board in 1942 to liberate from a form of serfdom the indigenous labourers on a large estate it had acquired in Bolivia. This action may have served as a catalyst of reform, Escobar argued. “When ten years later a nationalist revolutionary government passed the desperately needed law of land reform, the pioneer experiment of the Baptist in Huatajata was recognized as a valid antecedent”, he contended. Furthermore, it could serve as a model for further endeavours by missionaries who would not be content with mere verbal proclamation of the Gospel but also participate in activities in harmony with the New Testament model of a new humanity. “We need evangelists who are also prophets like John Wesley. Where possible, we need Christian politicians like Wilberforce. we need imaginative missionaries, ready to pioneer in areas of social justice and evangelism”.¹⁵

To some other Latin American Protestants, however, this approach failed to address adequately the question of violence as a present reality. Perhaps more than any other Latin American theologian of any denominational tradition, Míguez Bonino has come to grips in detail with this burning issue. A Methodist minister who has served as president of the World Council of Churches and been a professor of systematic theology at an ecumenical seminary in Buenos Aires, he has written extensively about precisely the exercise of political power by Christians.

In an article published in *The Ecumenical Review*, a theological journal published by the World Council of Churches, Míguez Bonino summarised his position on the legitimacy of violence. He thought it simplistic, naïve, and of little use to begin, as had become customary, by asking “whether or not to accept violence and whether or not to take part in it”. In fact, this Methodist theologian generalised, “whether Christians or not, we are always actively involved in violence - repressive, subversive, systemic, insurrectional, open, or hidden”. Rather than adducing evidence to substantiate his categorical allegation, Míguez Bonino added another by asserting that no neutral standpoint exists from which to discuss the issue dispassionately. He reserved some of his most acerbic rhetoric for the “Christian right-wing” notion that the natural order of society was one of stability and rationality, and that anything which challenged this smacked of violence. To Míguez Bonino, such thinking did little more than lend tacit support to the *status quo*. In his own dialectical cosmology, according to which every person is inextricably caught up in the constant interplay of opposing forces, it is only realistic for Christians who seek to understand the issue more deeply to ask whether the violence in which they participate, either directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously, is “either obedience to or betrayal of Jesus Christ”.¹⁶

Míguez Bonino anticipated inevitable challenges to his argument on the basis of the Bible. To his critics, he underscored the frequency of violence in the Bible and that while certain violent acts were either commanded or prescribed by God’s commandment, there is no universal ban on violence. This assertion, arguably self-evident to readers of the Old Testament, also applies to the New. The overarching theme there, Míguez Bonino explained, is change, not stability or quietude: “The biblical vision - centered in the person and work of Jesus Christ and its eschatological axis - always includes the dimension of order, rationality and conservation within the dynamic of transformation, not vice versa”.¹⁷ One consequence of this principle is that Christian ethics deals fundamentally not with people as they exist in their immediate circumstances, but in their process of becoming part of the new humanity in Christ. This process, taking part as it does within world history, inescapably involves continued participation in the violence which is inherent in life.

This did not lead Míguez Bonino to take a fatalistic view of Christian conduct or suggest that a *carte blanche* attitude was defensible. He emphasised that living as a Christian still necessitated considering “the kinds, forms and limits of violence present in a conflict involving oppression and liberation”. Accordingly, Christians should seek “to humanize this struggle as much as possible”.¹⁸ In this essay, at least, Míguez Bonino did not elaborate on which forms and kinds of violence might be the most humane. Apparently, his teleological approach to ethics left such questions open to consideration in individual circumstances.

Writing in 1989, Arthur F. McGovern, an American Jesuit philosopher and keen-eyed observer of liberation theology, declared that “though I have tried to search out writings that deal with the question of violence, I have yet to find any statement by a liberation theologian calling for violent revolution or declaring it necessary for bringing about social change in Latin America”.¹⁹ Stated in those terms, his statement might be true, but it masks the fact that some liberationists had either countenanced violence as an inescapable fact of life and even of Christian discipleship, or openly praised militant revolutionaries. The pertinent writings of those quoted in this regard in the present chapter place this beyond dispute. At the same time, it should be emphasised, some decried violence. Given the diversity of personalities, theological backgrounds, the kaleidoscope of social and political configurations, and other variables involved, it should not have been expected that the churchmen in question would have spoken univocally on such an explosive issue in an era of great frustration and indeed rage. Had they done so, they would have agreed on a matter on which, as indicated earlier, Christians have differed for nearly two millennia.

Alfonso López Trujillo *contra* Liberation Theology and Violence

By the early 1970s liberation theology had attracted increasing numbers of both adherents and detractors within the Roman Catholic Church. It should be emphasised that at no time was the line separating these two camps strictly geographical. Within Latin America, the emergence of men like Gutiérrez elicited something

akin to an equal and opposite reaction, not least within the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Among the churchmen who stood at the forefront of criticism of liberation theology was the Colombian bishop Alfonso López Trujillo, a highly influential figure whom Pope John Paul II would appoint to the College of Cardinals in 1983 and whose name was bandied about during that decade as a potential successor in the throne of Peter. His critique of liberation theology incorporated a direct thrust at what he perceived as its intellectually immature endorsement of violence, and therefore serves as a lucid illustration of how this issue was perceived by a dissenting Roman Catholic and the arguments which were marshalled against the revolutionary impetus which liberationists were highlighting.

López Trujillo expressed his opposition succinctly in a book titled *Liberation or Revolution? An Examination of the Priest's Role in the Socioeconomic Class Struggle in Latin America*. This slender volume appeared initially in Spanish in 1975 and in an English translation issued by a Catholic publishing house in the United States of America two years later. The Colombian bishop's argument against the alleged endorsement of revolutionary violence is strong in accusations but correspondingly weak in evidence. He lamented that a "messianistic Marxist framework" was becoming a precondition of much theology in Latin America, not least because some devotees of Marx, such as Mao and Lenin, had expressed their belief in the virtual inevitability of force to achieve major social revolutions, although others, such as Nikita Khrushchev - in harmony with Marx himself - had allowed that in some societies they could be effected peacefully. Without citing any names, López Trujillo obliquely accused liberation theologians of uncritically buying Marxist social analysis and, instead of conducting their own research, serving up half-baked summaries copied from other authors. He conceded that "some" of the men whom he had in his rhetorical sights could be commended for sincerity, energy, and commitment to their cause, but he found their efforts largely misdirected because they were devoting themselves to efforts to "shore up a form of Marxist revolution with [a] theological framework".²⁰

One perceived characteristic of liberation theologians which particularly irked López Trujillo was their unwillingness to acknowledge the legitimacy of positions which differed from their own Marxist preconceptions. He deplored that in some

of their eyes “revolution (presumably violent) is an imperative” and that “it is stated - as a nondiscussible fact - that there is only one way out: revolution. It is not even suspected that between revolution and the developing trend an intermediate means might be found”.²¹ Again, however, this bishop failed to substantiate his accusations by adducing any evidence, so it is impossible to know from reading *Liberation or Revolution* specifically which theologians he had in mind, although in other contexts within the same chapter he mentioned Gutiérrez, who was then the most prominent liberationist in Latin America.

The International Controversy over Liberation Theology

While liberation and other theologians throughout much of Latin America continued to debate the issue of employing violence, they came under renewed fire from Rome during the early years of the pontificate of John Paul II. It was this general dispute over various tenets of liberation theology which brought the movement into the public eye on both sides of the Atlantic. One would not be venturing far out on a limb of speculation to suggest that in 1980 relatively few Christians in either Europe or the Americas had more than the vaguest notion of what this theological current was. For that matter, a decade later the same could probably still be said of the majority. During the intervening years, however, the movement had gained the attention of the major media throughout the Western Hemisphere and in many European countries. Much of the controversy which brought it into public view focussed on the internationally publicised confrontation between the Brazilian Franciscan Leonardo Boff and the Vatican. In retrospect, this is not particularly surprising. By the mid-1980s no liberation theologian was more prominent than Boff. His public renown, however, had come suddenly. Educated at *inter alia* the universities of Munich and Oxford, this systematic theologian wrote his *Way of the Cross-Way of Justice*, *The Lord's Prayer: The Prayer of Integral Liberation*, and *Ecclesiogenesis: The Base Communities Revisited* initially in Portuguese during the 1970s, but their publication in English translations between 1980 and 1986 soon made Boff known outside the Lusophone world. He became especially controversial

and resented in conservative circles because of his book of 1981, *Church: Charism and Power*, in which he employed a quasi-Marxist conceptual framework to accuse the ecclesiastical hierarchy of expropriating the sacraments and the liturgy in general. Because the leaders of the highly centralised church had abused their power to legitimise the ruling social class, Boff argued, impoverished Catholics should develop a sense of class consciousness and ally with revolutionary elements in the church to cast off both their economic and ecclesiastical chains. With regard to polity, he advocated democratisation of authority and an openness to doctrinal and other change.

The inevitable confrontation between Boff and more or less like-minded liberation theologians on one side and defenders of conventional orthodoxy in the Vatican on the other reached what might have been its climax in 1984. On 6 August the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued its much-discussed “Instruction on Certain Aspects of the ‘Theology of Liberation’”, signed by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger and Archbishop Alberto Bovone. This brief document encompassed a succinct statement of prevailing sentiment in the Curia under Pope John Paul II, and without reference thereto it is virtually impossible to comprehend the general debate over liberation theology at the time when *The Mission* was being produced.

The “Instruction” left no doubt about the theological priorities of the ecclesiastics who drafted it. “Liberation is first and foremost liberation from the radical slavery of sin”, they pronounced. By contrast, “some are tempted to emphasize, unilaterally, the liberation from servitude of an earthly and temporal kind. They do so in such a way that they seem to put liberation from sin in second place, and so fail to give it the primary importance it is due”. The “Instruction” recognised that in Latin America “the seizure of the vast majority of the wealth by an oligarchy of owners bereft of social consciousness, the practical absence or the shortcomings of a rule of law, military dictators making a mockery of elementary human rights”, and various other abuses of power posed potent challenges to the church. The solutions, however, were not principally structural, and “the acute need for radical reforms of the structures which conceal poverty and which are themselves forms of violence should not let us lose sight of the fact that the source of injustice is in the human heart”. Indeed, the “Instruction” implored the faithful to believe that “the deliverance brought

by Christ and offered to all, be they politically free or slaves, . . . does not require some change in the political or social condition as a prerequisite for entrance into this freedom". These tenets struck at the heart of liberation theology. More specifically, the propensity of some liberation theologians to build their cases partly on the conceptual foundation of Marxism came under fire: "Let us recall the fact that atheism and the denial of the human person, liberty, and rights are at the core of Marxist theory". Nowhere did the "Instruction" address in more than cursory fashion the criticism that some liberation theologians were increasingly directing at the Roman Catholic Church itself for lending *de facto* support to oppressive structures in Latin America. The drafters of the document acknowledged that "there is a denunciation of members of the hierarchy and the magisterium as objective representatives of the ruling class which has to be opposed". This attitude was seen as contradictory to fundamental Catholic doctrine, however, as it "means that ministers take their origin from the people, who therefore designate ministers of their own choice in accord with the needs of their historic revolutionary mission".²²

Conclusion

As Juan Luis Segundo has emphasised, liberation theology became a much more complicated theological current in the early 1980s. Prior to that time, it had been largely an intellectual exercise on behalf of the poor. But, as one of its most prominent formulators, Segundo was quite prepared to admit in 1984 that to a great extent during twenty years of life it had failed to achieve its purpose of providing the church in Latin America with a new theology. Furthermore, far from gaining the allegiance of the impoverished masses, it had been largely ignored or rejected by them.²³

Partly as an attempt to rectify this situation, Leonardo Boff, Gustavo Gutiérrez, and other liberation theologians charted a new course for their efforts, which has subsequently co-existed alongside the older one. Rather than emphasising the intellectual exercise of theology from above, in Segundo's words "they began to understand their function as one of unifying and structuring people's understanding

of their faith, as well as grounding and defending the practices coming from this faith".²⁴ More stress was placed on learning from rather than teaching the poor and on the mobilisation of local Christian communities. Concomitantly, less attention was paid to challenging conventional ecclesiastical orthodoxy. In some quarters, moreover, renewed emphasis was placed on the rights of the marginalised indigenous peoples of South and Central America. Consequently, some members of the Roman Catholic hierarchy either believed that classic liberation theology had lost its impetus or thought the new direction was less threatening to the traditional understanding of the faith. Others, however, continued to oppose liberation theology in ways which we have considered earlier in this chapter.

The nagging question of the legitimacy of violence in the struggle for social justice arguably remained one which liberation theologians never solved; at least they never reached a consensus on it. For that matter, many of them failed to deal with this crucial issue in more than a superficial, truncated way during the 1970s and 1980s. The resulting inconsistency provided potential grist for literary and cinematic mills. Robert Bolt and the other creators of *The Mission* thus had at their disposal a dramatic issue which set the stage for tension in that film.

Furthermore, while *The Mission* was being filmed in South America in 1986, that continent remained the locus of many theological and ecclesiastical controversies which reverberated intercontinentally. The ripples which these disputes sent off washed across North American, British, and European shores. The publicity they gained caught the attention of many literary artists and other intellectually inclined people who otherwise would not have noticed them and in another era may have summarily dismissed them as remote, abstruse bickering in an atavistic religious institution. In our consideration of both the production and the content of *The Mission*, we shall take notice of how central aspects of liberation theology and the controversies which were raging over it during the mid-1980s unmistakably affected that film.

Notes

1. Juan Luis Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1975), p. 8.
2. Juan Luis Segundo, "Two theologies of liberation", *The Month*, CCLXVI, no. 1404 (October 1984), p. 323.
3. Gustavo Gutiérrez, "Notes for a Theology of Liberation", *Theological Studies*, XXXI, no. 2 (June 1970), p. 250.
4. Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The Power of the Poor in History* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1983), p. 28.
5. Pablo Richard, "Biblical Theology of Confrontation with Idols", in Pablo Richard, *et al.*, *The Idols of Death and the God of Life* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1983), pp. 7, 17.
6. Hélder Pessoa Câmara, "Is Violence the Only Option?" in Karl M. Schmitt (ed.), *The Roman Catholic Church in Modern Latin America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), pp. 147-149.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 150.
8. Dom Helder Camara, "The Force of Right, or the Right of Force?" in Gerald H. Anderson and Thomas F. Stransky (eds.), *Missions Trends No. 3. Third World Theologies* (New York: Paulist Press, and Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976), pp. 77-83.
9. The most accessible source for his views in English is Ed Garcia and John Eagleson (eds. and trans.), *My Life for My Friends: The Guerrilla Journal of Néstor Paz, Christian* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1975).
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 22-25.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 25-26.
13. Leonardo Boff, "Christ's Liberation via Oppression: An Attempt at Theological Construction from the Standpoint of Latin America", in Rosino Gibellini (ed.), *Frontiers of Theology in Latin America* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1979), pp. 120-121.
14. Samuel Escobar, "The Search For Freedom, Justice, and Fulfillment", in Anderson and Stransky, *Mission Trends No. 3. Third World Theologies*, pp. 105-108.

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 106-107.
16. José Miguel Bonino, "Violence: A Theological Reflection", *The Ecumenical Review*, XXV, no. 4 (October 1973), pp. 468-469.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 472.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 474.
19. Arthur F. McGovern, *Liberation Theology and Its Critics* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1989), p. 186.
20. Alfonso López Trujillo, *Liberation or Revolution? An Examination of the Priest's Role in the Socioeconomic Class Struggle in Latin America* (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, 1977), pp. 35-39.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
22. "Instruction on Certain Aspects of the 'Theology of Liberation'", in Alfred T. Hennelly (ed.), *Liberation Theology: A Documentary History* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1990), pp. 393-413.
23. Segundo, "Two theologies of liberation", p. 325.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 324.

CHAPTER EIGHT

ROBERT BOLT: INCONSISTENT IDEOLOGUE AS SCREENWRITER

Formative Influences

By the time *The Mission* was filmed, Robert Bolt was a well-established playwright and screenwriter who had won Oscars for his scripts, seen his dramas harvest critical praise in Britain and overseas, and gained an international reputation as a socially concerned man of letters. Indeed, his success antedated his writing of *The Mission* by well over two decades. It was to this seasoned and highly respected writer the prospective producers of that film turned in search of an appropriate script during the 1970s.

Both Bolt himself and countless critics from the worlds of literature, drama, and cinema have pointed out for decades that his work, especially the ethical problems he poses in most of them, are fruits of his background and vividly reflect his political and social views. Less obvious to many observers, no doubt, and certainly less readily explained, is the link between those tensions and Bolt's spiritual heritage. Although he was not a religious man in any conventional sense, one need not probe deeply to see religious motifs in many of his works, most notably in *A Man for All Seasons*, where the clash of spiritual and religious convictions with political and personal loyalties is obviously an overarching theme. This is no less the case in *The Mission*, where one witnesses an even bloodier if artistically less carefully fought battle of spiritual loyalties, ethical concerns, and unbridled imperialism.

The roots of this recurrent concern with moral issues, sometimes in an explicitly Christian context, lie partly in Bolt's upbringing in England. He was born in 1924 in Manchester, where his father owned a shop and his mother was a teacher. When interviewed in the late 1960s, Bolt admitted that his childhood had been "a very dark one - very gloomy, fraught, self-doubting, self-contemptuous" and that he had been a juvenile delinquent, although he does not appear to have been prosecuted for any criminal activity as a child. He confessed openly that he "used to steal

things from shops, and get into fights, and was secretive and violent". At school, moreover, the future acclaimed writer was by his own admission "at the bottom of the class, not just from time to time but *all* the time".¹

During the Second World War Bolt nevertheless managed to gain special admission to the University of Manchester to pursue a degree in commerce, even though he had no particular interest in that subject. His scholarly performance improved dramatically during his first year there, allowing him to continue his studies, although he changed his subject to history. Exposure to the *vita academica* brought Bolt into radical political circles. In 1942, while still a teenager, he became a member of the Communist Party. "I joined it for the usual reasons", he conceded in 1977. "The better reasons were a kind of generous, impatient impulse which young people have to put things right, a generous indignation against things which were wrong, mixed in with a good deal of arrogance. You have to be very young to think you can put these things right". Commenting on his decision to resign from the party in 1947, he stated obliquely that he left it "because too often I found I was having to say things which I didn't believe".² During his quinquennium of membership, Bolt fully subscribed to the fundamental doctrine of economic determinism. "I was a Marxist then and a Communist and of course economics was all that mattered - economics governed history, history governed politics and politics was life and therefore economics was life and so economic history was all that really mattered", he recalled a quarter-century later. Eventually he became disillusioned with both the inner workings of the party in Britain and with international communism generally, especially as manifested in Soviet imperialism, and resigned his membership. "It was ridiculous to have been a member of the Communist Party for four years as I had then and not to have realized that it has nothing to do with democracy or freedom", Bolt observed.³ His time as a card-carrying communist spanned his three years of military service during and shortly after the conclusion of the war. In the meantime he had made his first journey to South Africa as a member of the Royal Air Force before the end of the war. He found the Cape of Good Hope "absolutely marvellous" with a surfeit of "wine and peaches and all kinds of harmless junketings and again girls at parties" and concluded that there one could lead "an exceedingly privileged life if your skin is the right colour".⁴ There is no evidence

that the young Englishman attempted to evaluate South African society in terms of the political ideology he then espoused. Some measure of socialist idealism remained with him, however, even though he emphasised individualism, not the class struggle, after departing from communism. During the war Bolt gave up his dream of becoming a pilot and transferred to the army. He was trained briefly at Sandhurst and was stationed briefly in the Gold Coast (subsequently Ghana) with the Royal West African Frontier Force, an episode which might be regarded as highly ironic in light of his involvement in the Communist Party and his ongoing condemnation of imperialism after leaving that organisation. Bolt rose to the rank of lieutenant but was demobilised in 1946.

Following the Second World War, he cast about for an appealing ideology or religious foundation for his life. Bolt noted during an interview published in 1969 that he had “flirted with people like Martin Buber, the Jewish mystic, and Zen and Lao-Tse-Taoism and a little bit with the Christian mystics”, but as an adult he never became a formal member of any religious body.⁵

Yet the presence of an amorphous Christian influence lurks unmistakably behind the curtains of several of Bolt’s dramas and flavours some of his screenplays, too. He was raised a Methodist and compelled to attend worship at a chapel twice every Sunday while a child responsible to his parents. Bolt disliked this requirement, which by his father’s decree ended when the young man was sixteen years old. Bolt remarked in 1969, “I’ve never been back since”. He added, however, that “the fact remains that the groundwell of my thought only makes sense on the assumption that there is Somebody to whom I am responsible”.⁶ What Bolt’s implicit religious convictions were when he began to write *The Mission*, especially whether he then had a concept of deity even remotely resembling conventional theism in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, is not clear from his writings, and he does not appear to have commented on the matter publicly during that period of his life.⁷

By the end of the 1980s, Bolt was either an atheist or in any case a non-theist. During an interview in 1990 he declared that he no longer believed in God. Asked whether he ever had held such a belief, Bolt replied, “Not in the old-fashioned sense of the word. Not someone in a long white beard or anything like that!” He added that his present *credo* did not encompass any entity to whom he had to

apologise for anything. His spirituality, if that it may be called, was essentially an ethical subjectivity. "I believe that it is all up to me and that it doesn't matter what kind of a life I lead although I don't *choose* to do the evil things. That is a far bigger thing than having to get down on my knees and thank God or ask for his forgiveness".⁸

The Origins of a Career in Drama

After rising to the rank of lieutenant in the RAF, receiving his honours Bachelor of Arts in history at the University of Manchester in 1950, and earning a teaching diploma at the University of Exeter, Bolt in 1952 became a teacher of English at Millfield School in Street, Somerset. He remained there until 1958. During this time he wrote his first piece specifically for the theatre, namely a nativity play for the pupils at his school to perform. This modest work did not gain any more acclaim than one might expect, but it appears to have triggered Bolt's ambitions. Within the next few years the young teacher wrote several plays either for adults to produce on the stage or to be performed on radio. Some of these works focused on life and social problems in contemporary Britain. His first play produced in the legitimate theatre, *The Last of the Wine*, was an examination of society's helplessness when confronted by the threat of atomic annihilation, it presaged Bolt's highly visible participation in anti-nuclear protests. He then wrote *The Critic and the Heart*, which was produced in 1957 at the Oxford Playhouse. Inspired by W. Somerset Maugham's *The Circle* and featuring Michael and Vanessa Redgrave, this well-crafted play dealt with the tribulations which the terminal illness of a painter place upon people close to him. It received favourable reviews and served as a springboard to Bolt's career as a nationally known dramatist. Very shortly thereafter, he gained much greater recognition with his first drama performed in London, *Flowering Cherry*, which opened at the Haymarket Theatre in London on 21 November 1957. Highly regarded Sir Ralph Richardson played the title rôle of Jim Cherry, an unsuccessful insurance agent whose lot in life is reminiscent of that of Willie Loman in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*. This middle-aged English failure represents a

transitional urban generation in his country, caught between the lost rural British past and an uninviting life in anonymous urban society. Cherry dreams of leaving London to take up an agrarian lifestyle in the Somerset of his youth, but when he inherits enough money to enable him to fulfil this aspiration, he cannot decide to do so. An unidentified drama critic at *The Times* lauded the production and concluded that "the play suggests by its character drawing and by its dialogue that the London theatre has come by a new dramatist".⁹ *Flowering Cherry* ran for well over 400 performances in London and gave Bolt the means to give up his pedagogical career and devote most of his professional time to writing. It did not, however, indicate the direction which his most successful works would take during the next decade.

In the meantime, Bolt's career had taken a gigantic leap forward with *A Man for All Seasons*. It was initially a two-act radio play broadcast by the British Broadcasting Corporation in 1954 but adapted for television in Britain three years later. As a full-length play it was first performed on the stage in London in 1960 and in New York the following year. *A Man for All Seasons* would long remain Bolt's most highly regarded and best-known drama, one which critics praised internationally in its various versions. As a screenplay for the film of the same name with Paul Scofield in the lead rôle as Sir Thomas More it was also a transatlantic success, winning the Academy Award as the best film of 1966.

For our purposes, two of the most significant aspects of *A Man for All Seasons* are its historical character and the theme of individual moral dilemma in complex historical contexts. In brief, it is a prolonged study of the conflict between Henry VIII and his Lord Chancellor, Sir Thomas More. The latter, a loyal son of the Church Rome, refuses to renounce his Catholicism when his sovereign cuts his ties with the papacy and in effect nationalises the church in England. More's faith and ecclesiastical loyalty ultimately proves stronger than his fealty to his worldly king and cost him his life. Various, and in some cases roughly analogous, dilemmas would recur in several of Bolt's later works and become hallmarks of his literary production.

Creating Historical Moral Dilemmas for the Cinema

A comprehensive analysis of this theme obviously lies outside the scope of the present study, but we can note other pivotal instances of it in Bolt's screenplays from the 1960s through the mid-1980s, when he belatedly completed work on *The Mission*. His first script for the cinema was *Lawrence of Arabia*, which director David Lean commissioned him to write in the early 1960s. Bolt depicted the enigmatic Thomas Edward Lawrence as a complex, ambivalent hero whose leading of an Arabic revolt against the Turks during the First World War placed him into a dilemma of dual loyalties to these subjected people and the British Empire. While seeking valiantly to assist in the liberation of the Arabs from the Ottoman Empire, which was allied with Germany against *inter alia* the United Kingdom, Lawrence discovered that Arabic aspirations of self-determination clashed with British plans to assert post-war hegemony over much of the Middle East, thereby thwarting the Arabic goal. Lawrence never fully masters this dilemma; throughout the film he remains a man full of inner contradictions. Bolt's attempt to identify the external factors which determined his protagonist's at times inexplicable behaviour is not entirely successful.

Bolt then wrote the screenplay for Boris Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago*, which was produced in 1966. Here, too, one finds the protagonist caught in a dilemma at a critical juncture of history, namely the Bolshevik Revolution. Factors beyond the control of this young physician challenge his career, marriage, and life as he is compelled to participate in the establishment of a new political dispensation which he cannot wholeheartedly support. At times Zhivago's connection with the profound historical events affecting him seems tenuous, a characteristic which would resurface inconsistently in Bolt's subsequent writing.

Ryan's Daughter, which appeared in 1970, was Bolt's third historical screenplay set at the time of the First World War, although the military context in which the protagonist faces a moral dilemma is of a much different sort. Played by Bolt's wife Sarah Miles, Rosy Ryan is the dreamy daughter of an Irish publican who marries a middle-aged, widowed teacher whose personality differs markedly from her

romantic demeanour. Seeking the emotional fulfilment which she cannot find in her unhappy marriage to this uninspiring man, she becomes sexually involved with a handsome but lame British officer who has been sent home from the western front and posted to Ireland as part of the imperial effort to quell the Irish rebellion. As she is caught between two men, Rosy's predicament differs from those of some of Bolt's earlier and subsequent historical protagonists in that she has brought it upon herself. In the eyes of many critics, *Ryan's Daughter* lacked the intellectual and artistic depth of most of the other films in whose creation Bolt participated. It is difficult to disagree with that widespread opinion.

By the 1970s Bolt was at the height of his career, to the extent that such altitude can be measured by literary prolificacy and renown. He was also on the verge of driving himself into an early grave. "The man was a workaholic and they are extraordinary creatures as you might know", recalled Miles more than a decade later. His personal regimen was driving a wedge between them. "I was never allowed to interrupt him or knock at his study door unless there was fire or pestilence", she related. "He's be in there from five o'clock in the morning until six at night, and since he was a lark and I was an owl we never saw each other". Bolt's constant companions were of a more destructive sort. By his own admission, he was then drinking half a bottle of whisky and two bottles of wine daily and smoking eighty cigarettes daily.¹⁰

In the late 1970s Bolt undertook work on what would become the third film based on the novel *Mutiny on the Bounty* by Nordhoff and Hall. An untimely stroke which Bolt suffered after undergoing cardiac surgery in California in 1979, however, left him partly paralysed and temporarily speechless. The damage to his cerebrum also cost him his knowledge of French. Eventually, extensive physical therapy restored much of his mobility and ability to talk. In the meantime, Bolt returned to the task of writing the script of this maritime adventure, which was set in the South Pacific during the late eighteenth century. His version of the *Mutiny on the Bounty* story, which was released as *The Bounty* in 1984, differed from its predecessors in that the Fletcher Christian who leads the mutiny against the tyrannical Captain Bligh does not revolt wholeheartedly. Like many of Bolt's other historical figures,

he is caught between conflicting forces of loyalty to his superior officer and the appeal of liberty from his dominion.

Bolt as a Political Activist

While Bolt's career as a dramatist was evolving, his involvement in political protests also unfolded. This dimension of his avocational activity would eventually make its mark on his screenplay for *The Mission* and the novelisation of that script, though in various ways which one might not have predicted. After gaining some measure of public recognition, he supported one cause after another associated with the British Left. Bolt did not become an absolute pacifist, but in the early 1960s he co-operated closely with Bertrand Russell (1872-1970) in protests to restrict the development and testing of nuclear weapons. The disputatious British philosopher had campaigned against them since at least 1954, when he broadcast his speech about "Man's Peril" in the wake of the hydrogen bomb tests on Bikini Atoll in the South Pacific. In 1955 Russell had written a manifesto which Albert Einstein and other scientists co-signed. Three years later Russell became the first president of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. In 1960, however, he had taken his as yet ineffective crusade a step further by organising the more militant Committee of 100, which was dedicated to civil disobedience to draw attention to the nuclear threat. Bolt immediately became active in the new body, placing his time as well as his money on the line in the interests of this cause. In September 1961, while working on the script for *Lawrence of Arabia*, Bolt was arrested with Russell and dozens of other members of the Committee of 100 for allegedly conspiring to incite the public to demonstrate at Parliament Square against the deployment of nuclear weapons. In all, thirty members of the committee, including Russell and his wife, Anglican clergyman Michael Scott, zoologist Alex Comfort, Bolt, and fellow socialist playwright Arnold Wesker, received gaol sentences at Bow Street Magistrates' Court.¹¹ Bolt began to serve a one-month sentence in the Prison at Drake Hall in Staffordshire, where penal authorities refused to allow him to work on the script of *Lawrence of Arabia* at any time, a prohibition against which the Committee of

100 protested vehemently, and informed him that even if he wrote during his free time in prison his work would be confiscated. Bolt's offer to donate his earnings from the film to charity did not change this policy. Maintaining his principles, he refused to accept an offer of early release on his own recognizance if he would give a written undertaking not to engage in public demonstrations or incite others to do so. Bolt stood his ground despite urgent telegrams from the producers of *Lawrence of Arabia* that he must complete the script, the filming of which had already begun. Not until producer Sam Spiegel personally visited him behind bars and informed him that the employment of technicians was being endangered by his unyielding position did Bolt agree to compromise his stance and leave prison after serving approximately 50 per cent of his sentence.¹²

Bolt continued to align himself with liberal and socialist causes during the 1960s. During the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962, for example, he joined such British intellectual luminaries as J.B. Priestley and Philip Toynbee in protesting against thinly veiled threats by the Kennedy administration in United States of America to invade Cuba and depose Fidel Castro. The central issue, they insisted in a letter to *The Times*, was one of "hectoring of a small country by a great power". These British intellectuals emphasised that their public statement "does not necessarily imply any sympathy for Fidel Castro", adding that "we should be willing to address it, should occasion arise, to the Chinese Government about Quemoy and Matsu".¹³

Approximately eight months later, Bolt again added his name to an international protest, this time probably making a personal financial sacrifice in doing so. Acting in concert with the Anti-Apartheid Movement in Britain, he and forty-seven other playwrights and other writers, including such well-established *littérateurs* as Samuel Beckett, Graham Greene, J.B. Priestley, Harald Pinter, C.P. Snow, and Iris Murdoch, issued a public statement announcing that henceforth they would not allow their works to be performed in theatres which practised racial discrimination. They stressed that they had consulted South African artists and writers before taking this step, which involved instructing their agents to insert into all future contracts with theatres clauses forbidding discrimination on the basis of colour.¹⁴

On the home front, the erstwhile communist Bolt suggested to a convention of schoolmasters in the lions' den of Oxford in 1966 that those bastions of the *status*

quo and social privilege, the nation's public schools, be abolished with all deliberate speed. "Let the pupils of Eton be drawn from the streets of Salford, and they will emerge as gentlemen", he argued graphically. "By gentlemen I mean not merely that they will have nice manners, but that they will have a deep sense of superiority". Bolt saw no place for such institutions in a supposedly "egalitarian society". He reasoned that "the education system of any society provides a means - perhaps the only means - by which that society can lift itself up by its own bootlaces". Since the conclusion of the Second World War more than two decades earlier, however, this potential development had not been realised, despite certain educational reforms on a national level. "The motives behind the changes in our education system since the war seem to be those of sloth - the desire to do as little as possible - and avarice - the desire to spend as little as possible", thundered Bolt. "Both of these are clothed in hypocrisy".¹⁵

Bolt never drifted far from his socialist moorings, notwithstanding his departure from the Communist Party. At the same time, his acquisition of considerable wealth through his royalties and other sources of income did not transform him into either a Tory or an advocate of capitalism. He articulated his ideological position imprecisely in a letter to *The Times* in 1977. Arguing against a widely held belief in "free competition" as part of "the system of natural liberty", Bolt contended that private ownership of property was essentially a matter of exclusive use of it and the power to determine how others could use it. This prerogative, especially when it exists in large quantities, is the death knell for free competition and natural liberty. However, he emphasised immediately that he departed from Marx' conviction that the abolition of private ownership would inherently and immediately lead to collective ownership. "Here he seems to have fallen victim to that legal formalism which he so despised", Bolt reasoned, pointing out that in fact state ownership in socialist countries could be just as great an abuse of power as private ownership. He offered a concrete illustration in arguing, however, that this was not an inevitability. "The immorality of socialist society (as exemplified in the Soviet Union) appears to me not intrinsic but fortuitous. Marx and Lenin dismissed the moral achievements of the bourgeoisie as a hypocritical rear-guard action without relevance to the revolution. That mistake in theory produced horrible results in practice", wrote this erstwhile

history teacher. Bolt hoped that this sorry state of affairs was “not beyond redress”. He conjectured optimistically that “a state official could be prevented from abusing his power for selfish ends by law - without devitalizing the economy” but lamented that “Marx-Leninists will not allow that moral codes and legal forms are anything but consequences of the economic base” so left open the question as to how a socialist society could gain the capacity for self-criticism needed to implement such a reform. This belief in the moral determinism of the economic *Unterbau* struck Bolt as being “as fanciful as Adam Smith’s idea that selfishness could be made selfless by the operation of the market”.¹⁶

There does not appear to exist a consensus about the consistency of Bolt’s socialism as a factor in his literary production. By the 1970s, when his *State of Revolution* was produced, some critics detected a lack of ideological zeal in his creation of reality on the stage. It was whispered that Bolt had revealed his true bourgeois colours. In any case, as we shall see, both his screenplay for *The Mission* and his novelisation of that text bear unmistakable elements of the class struggle and anti-imperialism, but they do not appear to have emanated from a purely Marxist mind.

Notes

1. Ronald Hayman, *Robert Bolt* (London: Heinemann, 1969), pp. 1-5.
2. Sally Emerson, "Playing the game", *Plays and Players*, XXIV, no. 9 (June 1977), p. 11.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
7. Unfortunately, Bolt's death in 1995 prevented the present writer from interviewing him in England and attempting thereby to gain further insight into the contours of his concept of God and how this may have influenced his depiction of missionary endeavours undertaken by the Society of Jesus or his framing of the various moral problems presented in *The Mission*.
8. Victoria McKee, "The Day the Words Failed", *The Sunday Times Magazine*, 18 March 1990, p. 54.
9. "Sir Ralph Richardson's Achievement", *The Times*, 22 November 1957, p. 8.
10. McKee, "The Day the Words Failed", pp. 52, 54.
11. "Lord Russell Goes to Gaol", *The Times* (London), 13 September 1961, p. 10; "Prison for 32 Anti-Nuclear Supporters", *The Times*, 13 September 1961, p. 5.
12. "Robert Bolt Freed from Prison", *The Times*, 29 1961, p. 7.
13. Letter by Robert Bolt and fourteen other signatories to *The Times*, 8 October 1962, in *The Times*, 10 October 1962, p. 13.
14. "48 Playwrights in Apartheid Protest", *The Times*, 26 June 1963, p. 12.
15. "'Abolish Public Schools' Plea", *The Times*, 8 January 1966, p. 5.
16. Robert Bolt to *The Times*, 27 July 1977, in *The Times*, 1 August 1977, p. 13.

CHAPTER NINE

CREATING THE FILM

The filming of *The Mission* did not happen overnight but involved a very protracted period of maturation owing *inter alia* to revision of the screenplay, the reluctance of film producers to take on the project, and technical difficulties on location in South America. Indeed, thirty years passed between the appearance of Hochwalder's *The Strong Are Lonely* on the British stage and the filming of *The Mission*, and more than a decade went by before Robert Bolt's script entered the hands of the actors who would eventually enact it. In the meantime, significant changes had occurred in the world's cinematographic taste and in Latin America itself, not least the unfolding of and international publicity given to liberation theology. These delays account for some of the inconsistencies in the film, as should become evident later in the present study, such as the poorly developed epilogue which refers to the participation of Latin American priests in the struggle for political and economic liberation of their parishioners.

In the present chapter, we shall briefly examine various aspects of the production of *The Mission*, such as its history, the employment of indigenous actors to complement the British, American, and other members of the cast, financing of the project, logistical tribulations encountered in South America, and cinematographic techniques. To be sure, some of these matters have little or no direct relevance to pivotal missiological issues. Nevertheless, they are pertinent to the present study simply because they are inevitable matters in the creation of the film which, arguably more than any others during the fourth quarter of the twentieth century, has shaped public perceptions of the history of foreign missionary endeavours.

Launching the Transatlantic Project

The history of the production of *The Mission* can be traced to the mid-1970s, when the seasoned Italian producer Fernando Ghia, who had read the English

translation of Fritz Hochwalder's *Das heilige Experiment (The Strong Are Lonely)*, approached Robert Bolt and suggested that they co-operate on creating a film incorporating the same general theme. The now well-known British dramatist and screenwriter quickly agreed, and in 1975 the two men toured the ruins of some of the Jesuit missions in central South America. On this expedition, Bolt and Ghia also viewed the imposing Iguacu Falls, which the English traveller felt inspired to make a visual focal point for his script. Indeed, so enkindled was Bolt's creative spirit that he completed his initial script only seven months later. This text lay fallow for approximately a decade, however, while Ghia endured seemingly endless frustration in his search for financing of the project and Bolt both worked on other projects and suffered the debilitating effects of cardiac surgery and a paralysing stroke in its wake in 1980.¹ Near the end of this period, as has been discussed in Chapter Seven, controversies over liberation theology, most notably that which pitted the Brazilian Franciscan Leonardo Boff against Cardinal Ratzinger and other conservatives in the Vatican, gained international public attention.

The impasse was finally overcome in 1984 when Ghia convinced Goldcrest Films & Television Ltd. of London to undertake the project. This venture involved a partnership with David Puttnam of Goldcrest, whose production of various films had given him a reputation for successful, high-quality work, often on a grand scale. Actually, Ghia had given Puttnam the script as early as 1978, when the latter was laying plans for *Chariots of Fire*, which appeared three years later. Puttnam hired Roland Joff , a young director whose recent film, *The Killing Fields*, had garnered no fewer than three Academy Awards. Joff  lacked theological training and was hardly a religious man in any conventional sense. In fact, he described himself as an "awed atheist" but evinced a keen interest in both spiritual themes and the r le of the church in contemporary Latin America. By his own account, Joff  became "fascinated with liberation theology" only after he began work on *The Mission*, although it is conceivable that his interest in it antedated his involvement with the film.² Like many other successful directors, moreover, he proved to be a perfectionist with regard to details, including those concerning the Society of Jesus. As we shall see in the immediately following chapter, this personal quality caused him to hire Daniel Berrigan, the well-known American Jesuit political activist and literary figure

who had served as a missionary in Latin America, to serve as an adviser during the filming. Not pinching Goldcrest's pennies, Puttnam and Joffé hired the Englishman Jeremy Irons, who had made his reputation in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and other films, and the equally renowned Italian-American Robert De Niro to play opposite each other in the leading rôles as two very different kinds of Jesuit missionaries. Their most felicitous choice, however, was arguably giving the Irish actor Ray McAnally the opportunity to play the papal legate who inspected the Jesuit mission field and recommended its closure in a tortured decision. The other parts were assigned chiefly to established North American actors and South American Indians, the latter of whom who were hired in Colombia as poorly paid supplementary personnel.

True to Bolt's original vision, the area of the Iguacu Falls was used for much of the filming. The greater part of the production, however, actually took place in Colombia, which offered an abundance of relatively accessible tropical rain forest, indigenous supernumeraries, a marginal technical infrastructure, and, in the city of Cartagena, a Baroque church, Santo Domingo, which was modified to serve as a mission chapel in the film. Many of the scenes were shot at a remote location near the Panamanian border in northern Colombia which, however, lay only five minutes from a bus route. Three members of the production team searched for an appropriate South American venue for three months before finding the one they eventually used.³ On the national level, the Colombian government gave what Joffé called "fantastic co-operation" without specifying the forms this took. On the other hand, the choice of Colombia soon proved highly imperfect from a logistical viewpoint. Locally, public officials lent considerably less support than had their superiors in the nation's capital. Indeed, Joffé related that "the Colombians who worked with us on the ground didn't care what Bogotá had decided, and there were moments that were utterly impossible". A primary reason for their obstructionist behaviour was the fact that the site at which Joffé had decided to construct a Guaraní rain forest village lay on a major narcotics smuggling route. Colombian soldiers thus constantly patrolled the area. Producer David Puttnam labelled the resulting chaos "sheer anarchy". No less bluntly, Joffé called it "sheer hell". Complicating their chronic bureaucratic headaches, the Colombian climate saddled the production

team with temperatures which sometimes soared to over forty degrees Celsius, high humidity, torrential downpours, and floods. Deadly snakes, swarms of mosquitoes, and other zoological nuisances accentuated the misery. Not surprisingly, most of the Europeans and North Americans on the scene fell sick at least once. Some of the illnesses were quite serious, both physically and as threats to the progress of the filming. Joffé spent four days in hospital after collapsing on the set, apparently from dehydration,⁴ while Puttnam developed amoebic dysentery and two ulcers.⁵ By June 1985 conditions had become so serious that Goldcrest sent a physician from England to Colombia to tend to the cast and crew on a full-time basis.⁶

The primitive condition of the film industry in Colombia compelled Goldcrest to ship in nearly everything it needed for producing *The Mission*. Ghia's evaluation of local circumstances was severe: "There is simply no film industry in Colombia. What they have is technologically unacceptable. We had to bring in everything." Ghia's generalisation is overdrawn, but nevertheless Goldcrest was forced to import *inter alia* more than 600 wigs and other hairpieces from Rome as well as large quantities of plastic cutlery, paper plates, tea, and salad cream from England. Within Colombia, members of the production team collected a menagerie of such animals as wild pigs, crocodiles, armadillos, and monkeys.⁷

Those scenes which were filmed in Cartagena, which served as colonial Asunción, proved less harrowing for the European personnel. That Caribbean city offered a relatively high degree of comfort as well as a variety of tourist attractions to entertain them during their limited leisure time. Centuries-old walls and narrow, cobblestone streets added to the appeal of the locale. To be sure, relations between Spanish colonists there and the British had been historically burdened. After *conquistadores* had founded Cartagena in 1533, it served as a port from which treasure, much of it stolen from the indigenous population, was shipped to Spain. Its wealth and economic potential inevitably attracted British adventurers, such as Sir Francis Drake, who in the 1580s attacked it before the city's defences were bolstered. Whatever animosity towards the once detested *británicos* had existed in colonial days had essentially dissipated by the time *The Mission* was filmed in Cartagena and elsewhere. That episode in the history of cinematography involved a tactic which differed vastly from those used by mariners like Drake. "Last year

the buccaneering British film producer David Puttnam and his Goldcrest company took Cartagena without a cannonball fired in anger”, wrote one English journalist on the scene. “Puttnam’s trick was to reverse the strategy of previous British invaders. He came not to pillage but to invest a considerable treasure chest of his own”. Its magnitude was estimated at approximately \$7 500 000 for the Colombian economy. Puttnam’s prediction that other major film producers would converge on Cartagena went unfulfilled, however.⁸

Guaunanas as Guaraní

The employment of indigenous South Americans as both titled actors in minor parts and supernumeraries posed additional challenges. Along the banks of the San Juan River, in the Colombian department of El Choco, Goldcrest personnel recruited approximately 350 Guaunana men, women, and children in the villages of Burujón, Togorama, Pángala, and Papayo. As extremely few roads then existed in El Choco, its inhabitants had remained relatively isolated from European colonial civilisation in their habitat of dense jungles, mountains, and coasts on both the Caribbean and the Pacific. These personnel were used in scenes filmed both in the rain forest and in Cartagena. Few had previously set foot in that city. As one British observer noted, transporting them there by airplane was “an act akin to spiriting an equal number of Londoners from Oxford Street and whisking them to the moon”. To accommodate them, Goldcrest chose an apartheid solution. While the European personnel stayed at the Hilton Hotel, the Guaunanas lived in a village of huts erected in a jungle clearing on the outskirts of Cartagena, ostensibly “to make the Indians feel at home”. How these neophytes to the world of the cinema rated their accommodation is not recorded, but in any case their settlement soon attracted swarms of rats which raided their supplies of food. David Puttnam proposed comprehensively fumigating the entire area, but the Guaunanas’ leaders rejected this drastic suggestion. Instead, a traditional healer from the group reportedly “went off to perform some secret ritual” which seemed effective. No solution to the chronic plague of mosquitoes came from any source, however. When Puttnam requested the healer to “have a

word” with them, the healer retorted that anyone who thought he could speak to the mosquitoes should have his head read.⁹

In Cartagena, the Guaunanas had to cope with life in Spanish, a language which was no less foreign to most of them than it was to the British personnel there. On the film set, the language was the equally exotic English tongue. Film cameras were a novelty to the Guaunana actors, but they did not lack a knack for the theatrical. “Often they were perfect in the first take”, recalled Puttnam in an interview approximately twelve months later, adding that “I cannot find the words to express my admiration for their sense of responsibility and dedication”. After *The Mission* won the *Palme d’Or* at Cannes in 1986, Puttnam sent a letter to the Guaunana leadership, assuring members of the tribe that people in Europe had appreciated the beauty of their culture and promising to visit their villages in El Choco to show them the film. Part of his joy may have been caused by the fact that the employment of such local talent had not significantly encumbered Goldcrest’s budget. Collectively, the Guaunanas received \$80 000 as a direct payment for their contributions to *The Mission*. By contrast, De Niro reportedly received \$2 000 000 for playing Rodrigo Mendoza in what some critics perceived as a lacklustre performance. Subsequently, before the release of the film Goldcrest made an initial donation of \$250 000 to a fund intended to purchase agricultural equipment and finance health and educational programmes for the tribe.¹⁰

Creating a Visual Masterpiece

The memorable photography of Chris Menges, which brought him an Academy Award, entailed considerable planning and tested that photographer’s creative genius as well as his ability to cope with the particular challenges which the uninviting environment posed. A veteran English cinematographer who had co-operated brilliantly with Joffé in *The Killing Fields*, he took on the project undaunted by the prospect of working in a South American jungle, an environment in which he had toiled nearly twenty years earlier in connection with the television documentary film *The Tribe That Hides from Man*. Menges foresaw few technical problems,

at least as far as equipment was concerned. He chose Arriflex cameras with state-of-the-art anamorphic lenses from JVC which he purchased in London and transported to Colombia. As film, Menges selected a combination of Kodak 247 and Agfa 320 negative, relying chiefly on the former except in scenes when more depth was required. After the project was completed, he expressed satisfaction with the equipment he had chosen. Historical and artistic research complemented Menges' choice of equipment. He and Joffé spent countless hours at the National Gallery and elsewhere in London to gain some familiarity with eighteenth-century Spanish clothing, lighting fixtures, and other properties with which they would produce the "look" of *The Mission*. Eventually the Italian Enrico Sabbatini designer was retained to create the richly detailed costumes, which in general proved to be historically accurate but arguably somewhat idealised for a story played out in the rain forest and colonial Asunción.¹¹

The greatest challenges were those which the environment and Joffé's demanding direction posed. As a general principle, Joffé insisted that every scene be shot with two cameras simultaneously. While often advantageous to the actors, "it's a real nightmare for a cinematographer to shoot both ways", explained Menges. "It takes an enormous amount of concentration from the crew when there are two cameras running on every set. It is double the amount of markers, double the amount of people, double the amount of noise, and double the amount of confusion". While Joffé was putting his cast and crew members through their paces, the exacting physical environment took its toll. Simply maintaining a constant stream of electricity for lighting in old buildings and other settings proved challenging. Menges related how while shooting a scene alongside a river the principal generator had to be switched off suddenly when it was reported that heavy rain was falling upstream in the mountains. "That meant within an hour there would be a three-foot, four-foot tidal wave coming down the river", he explained. "We had to withdraw the generator right in the middle of the shot and we ended up just using candles and God knows what. That happened quite a lot". The existing natural light often proved surprisingly inadequate to cinematographers who had expected the jungle to offer an abundance of it. Menges discovered that during the rainy season in Colombia his equipment was pushed to its limit, though at times brilliant sunshine eased his task considerably:

“That was the hard thing - the inconsistency of light. We needed strong light”. . . . But when the sun shone, it was a joy to work in the jungle. You get wonderful contrasts and beautiful light”. The topography inevitably complicated Menges’ task. Most notably, capturing the ascents of the Iguacu Falls on film created a dilemma. “You were either hanging over the edge of the cliff on harnesses and ropes filming actors coming up on harness and ropes, or you were on the other side of the falls with terribly long lenses trying to film another point of view when it is virtually impossible to film another point of view”, he recalled. In retrospect, Menges thought this task would have been facilitated had the crew elected to erect very high towers alongside the falls. Instead, he chose to photograph some of the scenes from low angles and thereby accentuate the precipitous nature of the ascent. What technicians did construct, however, were walkways, some of which stretched for several kilometres, through the jungle to support rolling cameras. These structures eased considerably the task of photographing in difficult circumstances which otherwise would have inhibited the presence of cumbersome equipment. Not everything in the natural environment was problematical, though. The river on which some of the scenes were composed offered various kinds of depths and currents. It provided torrents at which some of the most dramatic scenes were shot but, not far downstream, broadened and had a depth of only approximately one metre, which facilitated the filming of the final battle scene, in which both colonial soldiers and Guaraní warriors are pitched out of their watercraft.¹²

A Financial Success, Too?

It cannot be overemphasised that the primary factor motivating financially troubled Goldcrest to undertake the production of *The Mission* was neither the desire to recreate a historically meaningful portrayal of a fascinating episode in Jesuit missions history nor to enlighten viewers to twentieth-century exploitation of indigenous peoples in South America but simply the need to make money. As we shall point out in a subsequent chapter, this seemingly self-evident pecuniary motivation did not characterise all films about the church in Latin America made

during the 1980s and early 1990s. It certainly drove the production of *The Mission*, however, and at times questions about its profitability clouded public discussion of its artistic merits.

In November 1985, while editors in London were splicing together segments just filmed in South America, Goldcrest chairman Sir Richard Attenborough (who is perhaps best remembered for his masterpiece of 1983, *Gandhi*) announced publicly that "*The Mission* was over budget - not by very much, but it was over". Incensed at this accusation, which he believed had been made unfairly behind his back, Puttnam acknowledged that "going over budget is a producer's biggest sin" and that therefore he and Joffé "went to great pains to stick to ours". He informed *The Sunday Times* that according to an internal Goldcrest memorandum *The Mission* had cost £16 940 000 to produce, whereas its budget had allowed for expenditures totalling £17 300 000. By contrast, according to the same document two of Goldcrest's other recent films, *Revolution* and *Absolute Beginners*, had both exceeded their budgets by more than 30 per cent. Puttnam challenged anyone audacious enough to continue to level accusations at him to sit down with him and attempt to prove them. Meanwhile, Goldcrest chief executive Jake Eberts sought to avert a row between Attenborough and Puttnam by asserting that while *The Mission* had exceeded its original budget its costs had fallen within its adjusted budget.¹³ Puttnam left London in favour of Hollywood to become head of production at Columbia Pictures, but the dispute over the cost of *The Mission* continued to rage in England. In March 1987, some six months after the premiere of the film, an article in the British periodical *Screen* indicated that expenditures had jumped from \$18 000 000 to \$25 000 000. Zealously guarding his professional reputation, Puttnam vented his wrath almost immediately in *The Sunday Times*, insisting that the discrepancies in the figures could be attributed to a combination of "ignorance of the processes of filming" and "deliberate disinformation". Contradicting his earlier figures, he emphasised that the Goldcrest board had set a budget of £16 900 000, of which he had spent merely £16 498 000, thereby supposedly saving the company approximately £92 000. His erroneous mathematics leaves one wondering how much, if anything, Goldcrest had actually saved. Puttnam suggested that part of the confusion could be traced to the fact that during the months when *The Mission* was being

produced, the rates of exchange between British sterling and the United States dollar varied by more than 30 per cent. He averred, however, that because all the expenditures had been in British currency, only it should be used as a measure of the film's true cost of production.¹⁴

Whatever the final cost may have been, *The Mission* proved to be an almost instant box office success, particularly in the United Kingdom. During the first week after its premiere, viewers spent more than £74 000 to see the film. This exceeded the initial take for *Gandhi*.¹⁵ Puttnam optimistically predicted that gross revenues would be between \$50 000 000 and \$100 000 000, which would have placed *The Mission* into the same category as his *Chariots of Fire* as one of the most successful films in the history of the British cinema and lift Goldcrest out of its financial doldrums.¹⁶ This did not happen, but enough people attended showings or purchased video copies of *The Mission* to make it a profitable undertaking.

Notes

1. Judith Miller, "'The Mission' Carries a Message From Past to Present", *The New York Times*, 26 October 1986, Section II, p. 19.
2. Mark I. Pinsky, "'The Mission', Junipero Serra, and the politics of sainthood", *Jump Cut*, no. 33 (February 1988), p. 104.
3. Douglas Keay, "Bearded gods and minor deities", *The Sunday Times*, 19 October 1986, p. 46.
4. "Joffé's jungle fever", *The Sunday Times*, 9 June 1985, p. 39.
5. Miller, "'The Mission' Carries a Message From Past to Present", pp. 19, 25.
6. "Trekker, MD", *The Sunday Times*, 30 June 1985, p. 38.
7. Keay, "Bearded gods and minor deities", p. 46.
8. Geoffrey Matthews, "Treasure returns to city of blood", *The Times*, 8 January 1986, p. 32.
9. Geoffrey Matthews, "Mission almost impossible", *The Times*, 11 September 1986, p. 10.
10. *Ibid.*
11. Nora Lee, "*The Mission*, a Film About Passion", *American Cinematographer*, LXVIII, no. 2 (February 1987), pp. 29-30.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 29-33.
13. "Mission to confuse", *The Sunday Times*, 17 November 1985, p. 39.
14. "Puttnam bites back", *The Sunday Times*, 22 March 1987, p. 47.
15. "Mission successful", *The Sunday Times*, 2 November 1986, p. 18.
16. Alex Sutherland, "A crucial Mission", *The Sunday Times*, 19 October 1986, p. 46.

CHAPTER TEN

DANIEL BERRIGAN'S INFLUENCE AND CRITICAL DIARY

A Book about a Filming Expedition - and More

As plans to transform Bolt's screenplay into a film belatedly reached maturation and the project began to gain international attention, a second book resulting from the project germinated. This volume, an undisguised attempt to capitalise on the international publicity which accompanied the *Palme d'Or* which the film received at Cannes, was Father Daniel Berrigan's *The Mission: A Film Journal*.¹ Originating in part as a series of articles published in the nondenominational and politically liberal American periodical *Sojourners*, it evolved into a loosely written volume of some 160 pages which the reputable publishing house Harper & Row issued in 1986. The serial beginnings of the work, together with its author's acerbic wit, keenly observant eye, and penchant for poetry left deep imprints on the form and content of this book.

Precisely why Berrigan wrote and submitted his "journal" for publication is not apparent from its pages. It lacks a preface in which the author might have elaborated on his purpose or purposes in recording his observations and related thoughts as well as writing a few poems which arose from either the filming or the environments in Colombia and Argentina. Boredom on the set appears to have provided one stimulus. Berrigan brought armloads of reading material to South America, books and magazines of both religious and secular kinds. On 8 June, while still in Colombia, he wrote that "without this diary to scribble and a good book or two, time would indeed hang heavy and limp".² One simply cannot know from the work itself, however, whether Berrigan intended from the outset to publish his journal or, having made that decision, whether it shaped the content or form of his remarks.

Furthermore, one cannot profitably approach Berrigan's published diary with lofty literary expectations. It was very loosely written and yields no evidence that it ever received even the light editing that would have made it a more beneficial and illuminating book. To be sure, the absence of a unifying structure and the presence of redundancies characterise countless diaries that have gone to press.

Yet some of the blunders cannot be readily excused. Berrigan used the term *reducciones*, for example, several times before bothering to translate it. How a blunder of that sort could have escaped the eye of an attentive editor defies comprehension. Moreover, Berrigan referred obliquely to "Phil" at least three times; this allusion is presumably meaningful to readers who are aware of his brother Philip's actions as an activist, but how anyone who is not could have grasped the significance of those unannotated passages is a mystery. The text itself, though on the whole not difficult to understand, contains many examples of stilted diction, including *inter alia* either Latin phrases or obscure, Latin-based words which reveal more about Berrigan's classical education in the custody of the Society of Jesus than they do about the subjects which he sought to communicate through them. What kind of readers Harper & Row anticipated is also unclear. The same might be said of the editorial principles which were employed. The book is at once highly readable and stilted, simply written in an anecdotal style and prolix. One wonders how many readers of *The Mission: A Film Journal* are familiar with such words as *transmogrified*, *quondam*, and *tergiversated*. Similarly, the presence of an untranslated Latin phrase like *id propter quod omnia* on the second page of the book hardly suggests demanding editing or sheds light on the kind of readership, if any, Berrigan himself had in mind as he wrote. Perhaps he initially assumed that only he and possibly a small number of interested scholars would ever read these pages. If so, one suspects that he was correct.

Much more could be written about *The Mission: A Film Journal*, though apparently little has been. In the present study we must treat it briefly as an adjunct to the film under consideration. We shall consequently focus our attention on its author's religious and political beliefs and activities insofar as they contribute to an understanding of *The Mission*, his comments about the film itself, and central ideas expressed in this book, particularly as they bridge the gap separating Bolt's ideational framework and its representation on the screen. In the final pages of the present chapter, Berrigan will pass judgement on the film itself.

The Man and His Ministry

Few religious personalities in the United States of America gained more prominence in political movements during the late 1960s and the 1970s than Daniel Berrigan, S.J. This American of Irish and German ancestry was born in Virginia, Minnesota, an iron mining town where his father was a railway engineer and radical trade union official, in 1921. After the elder Berrigan's job fell victim to his socialist views and political activity, Daniel grew up mainly in Syracuse, New York, and entered the Society of Jesus while yet a teenager in 1939. He received his undergraduate education at St. Andrew on Hudson, where he was awarded a Bachelor of Arts in 1946. Berrigan subsequently earned a Master of Arts at another Jesuit institution, Woodstock College in Baltimore, in 1952, the year when he was also ordained to the priesthood. In the meantime as a linguistically talented novice he had begun to teach English, French, and Latin at his order's secondary school in Jersey City, New Jersey. After receiving his second degree, he spent a year doing military chaplaincy work in Europe. Berrigan returned to the United States of America in 1954 and spent three additional years as a secondary school teacher in New York City before being called to Lemoyne College in Syracuse as assistant professor of theology. After a sabbatical year in Europe, he served as an editor of the periodical *Jesuit Missions* in New York City for two years and became associate director of United Religious Work at Cornell University in 1966, the first Catholic to hold that position. At Cornell he also taught courses in modern drama and New Testament theology.

The United States was then becoming increasingly deeply mired in the military and political conflicts of Vietnam, to which opposition groups of many sorts were sprouting as President Lyndon Johnson seemed incapable of significantly changing national policy and effecting a withdrawal. Berrigan was one of the founders of the national peace organisation Clergy and Laity Concerned about Vietnam. He gained international attention by travelling to Hanoi to escort three released American pilots back the United States. Berrigan's outspoken opposition to the policy of the Johnson administration in Southeast Asia angered many of his colleagues. His diocesan superior, the staunchly anti-communist archbishop of New York Cardinal

Francis Spellman, forced him to give up his editorial position in 1965 by assigning him to Latin America. Berrigan reasoned that “evidently my absence was to make war easier to wage with the concurrence of the church”. This was the young Jesuit’s first significant encounter with that part of the world. He resented it and found it temporarily devastating. Berrigan wrote later, “The intemperate speed with which I was disposed of quite reduced me for a time to a kind of human detritus - dust, ashes, and desolation. . . . I find it impossible to describe, even to myself, the atmosphere of those sulphurous hours, hours like weeks, weeks like years. The heavens remained closed, turned to adamant; no rain fell”. His travels in Mexico, Colombia, and other countries gave him indelible impressions of economic exploitation, attendant social deprivation, and other harsh realities of life in Latin America.³ Nevertheless, the conflict in Vietnam remained at the centre of his moral consciousness.

This exile ended with the above-mentioned call to Cornell University. Berrigan’s name, usually coupled with that of his younger brother, Philip, burst into the national conscience after May 1968 when he, together with his brother and seven other Roman Catholic activists illegally entered an office of the Selective Service System in Catonsville, Maryland, seized the files of a large number of potential conscripts, and burning them outdoors with homemade napalm as a dramatic act of protest against their country’s protracted military involvement in Southeast Asia. The “Catonsville Nine”, as these anti-war demonstrators were immediately dubbed, were promptly arrested, tried for the destruction of federal property, and sentenced to three years’ imprisonment. Rather than reporting for incarceration, however, the Berrigans and two of their fellow defendants went underground and became the objects of a highly publicised manhunt. They were eventually captured. Daniel Berrigan received a reduced sentence and served eighteen months of it at the federal prison in Danbury, Connecticut.

Berrigan’s stand against the unpopular war had made him not only well-known but, in some Roman Catholic and other circles, something of a folk hero whose picture, often in small groups of protestors, graced various publications and appeared relatively often on television. Upon his release from prison, he was appointed professor of theology at Woodstock College in New York (not to be confused with the Jesuit institution where he had received his Master of Arts two decades earlier).

Berrigan continued to remain prominent through his participation in numerous movements, such as that against nuclear weapons on both sides of the Atlantic.

In American literary circles, Berrigan had begun to gain a reputation as a highly gifted poet long before he was recognised an activist and political maverick. Much of his poetry reflects his involvement in social and political issues and can be understood as a direct expression of it. Berrigan's poems are, for the most part, tendentious though by no means without artistic merit. The first of his many books, *Time without Number*, was awarded the Lamont Poetry Award of the American Academy of Poets. Laurels mounted for several of his subsequent volumes. His literary career progressed through the 1960s and gained much wider public notoriety while he was in prison early in the following decade. Berrigan used productively the years when he was wrestling with the United States Department of Justice by writing a one-act play, *The Trial of the Catonsville Nine*, which was first staged in Los Angeles in February 1971 and very shortly thereafter off-Broadway in New York, where the theatre critic of *The New York Times* called it a "riveting work" and "a wonderfully moving testimony to nine consciences" which exposed "the simplicity of men with many fears but no doubts".⁴ The production moved to the Lyceum Theater on Broadway in June and again received critical accolades.⁵ To be sure, not everyone in the United States during that time of intense public debate over the moral legitimacy of American military involvement in South-east Asia appreciated Berrigan's craftsmanship with the pen. In Maryland, for example, two state legislators sought in October to decrease state and federal support for the Center Stage Theater in Baltimore, which had opened its 1971-1972 season with *The Trial of the Catonsville Nine*, on the ground that it produced "treasonistic [*sic*] plays". These two Irish-Americans contended that tax revenues should not be used to "subsidize treason". They also announced their intention to petition the Ford Foundation, which had recently given the Center Stage Theater \$320 000, not to grant it further financial support.⁶ Berrigan, however, may have had the last laugh. In mid-1971 he received an invitation to join an organisation called the "Friends of the F.B.I." whose purpose was to increase public sympathy for that arm of the Department of Justice. Replying from his cell at the Federal Correctional Institution in Danbury, the convicted priest assured the membership committee - presumably

tongue-in-cheek - that he would indeed be pleased to join but emphasised that at the moment he was not in a position to make a financial contribution.⁷

Berrigan, who also co-founded the Catholic Peace Fellowship, served as a co-chairman of the American Fellowship of Reconciliation after his release from prison and the withdrawal of his country's military forces from Vietnam. His pacifist convictions were well-known long before *The Mission* was filmed. Accordingly, he rejected that segment of Roman Catholic moral theology which deals with the participation of Christians in military activity, especially the "just war" theory which has been normative since the time of St. Augustine (354-430). His stance emerges much more clearly in his diary than in *The Mission* as such. Early in that volume, Berrigan wrote that "'just wars,' in our century, waged with the weapons we have ghoulishly stockpiled" were inherently unjust and an atavistic "illusion". He quoted approvingly a friend, Carroll Dozier, who had written, "The 'just war' theory must be filed away in the drawer that conceals the flat earth theory and the theory of the sun traveling around earth".⁸ This perception of and attitude towards twentieth-century militarism influenced Berrigan's understanding of it in the eighteenth century and, indirectly, the advice which he gave director Roland Joffé with regard to the final major scene of the film, a matter which we shall consider near the end of the present chapter.

Berrigan's Rôles

Berrigan's participation in *The Mission* began unexpectedly in 1984 when he received a telephone call from Joffé at his "urban aerie" in New York City. The director informed him of his intention to film Bolt's script and that he had already engaged Robert De Niro to play the rôle of Rodrigo Mendoza. Joffé asked Berrigan whether he would be willing to accompany his troupe to South America for a few months and serve as an advisor to both him personally and his actors on spiritual matters pertaining to the Society of Jesus. Pecuniary and other practical details of the arrangement are not matters of public record. In any case, Berrigan, who retrospectively described the offer as "a long story, a large commitment. A sense both of burden and possibility", accepted. Precisely why he was willing to do so

is difficult to ascertain. What he probably did not realise at the time was that his rôle in the undertaking would not be entirely off-screen.

Berrigan returned to South America the evening before Easter in 1986 to assume his advisory duties. His port of entry was Cartagena, Colombia, where Joffé and his crew were about to begin filming those scenes which ostensibly took place at two Jesuit missions in the Mission Territory. The British director requested Berrigan, as one of his first tasks, to immerse the agnostic Jeremy Irons in Jesuit spirituality. Berrigan took his charge to the church of San Pedro Claver in Cartagena, where the two men spent thirty-six hours in alternating periods of silence and reflection. The Jesuit mentor schooled Irons in the *Spiritual Exercises* of Saint Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus. Berrigan subsequently wrote that his pupil was “a ready spirit, very supple of mind, a listening being who went away silent and returned curious”. Their agenda covered much of the spectrum of Christian spirituality. “We discussed among other matters sin, redemption, guilt, responsibility”, Berrigan recalled. “We dwelt a long time on the meaning of faith, which appeared to me as a kind of unexpected intervention, a third party, so to speak, entering an impasse and bringing, if not relief, at least a measure of light and hope”. The two men also discussed the general question of egotism in the cinema and how it might compromise the integrity of a priestly performance by Irons. This seemed highly relevant to Berrigan, who noted that he had previously met that actor in New York and found him to be “highly skilled but without notable soul”.⁹ During their retreat in Cartagena, Berrigan reminded his British disciple of certain precedents of “non-ego” in stellar performances by Paul Scofield in *A Man for All Seasons* and by other actors in the French productions *Diary of a Country Priest* and *Monsieur Vincent*. Berrigan reported that Irons “listened with great attentiveness” to his advice on this matter and that subsequently “a peace, earned and acceded to” dwelt in Irons.¹⁰ Why the American Jesuit did not perform an analogous service at that time for Robert De Niro or, apparently, any of the other actors is not known with certainty, although a probable explanation is evident. It may have been simply a matter of the sequence of the filming of the scenes. Most of *The Mission*, it will be recalled, was shot in Colombia between April and June 1985. Only later did the project remove to the vicinity of the Iguacu Falls in Argentina. It was then and there that the pivotal scene in which the penitential Rodrigo Mendoza drags his

heavy burden of military hardware, symbolising his violent past, up the falls and is forgiven by a Guaraní who cuts loose the burden, was filmed. At that time Berrigan coached him about matters pertaining to the Society of Jesus, especially Berrigan's own novitiate.¹¹

In any case, Berrigan never appears to have overcome completely his initial apprehension about the legitimacy of one of his central tasks as an employee of Gold Crest Studios. "I remember my qualms when 'spiritual tactics' (means of helping the actors prepare for their part in the film as Jesuit priests) were first mentioned in New York", he confided. "My sense at the time was that the sacred should not become a kind of tool or ploy or game, a chapter out of actors' school, ensuring a better act. This puts it crudely but perhaps accurately". Berrigan grudgingly allowed that "there may, on the other hand, be a better way to prepare such heroic parts as are demanded by the film; but if there is, I have yet to hear of it".¹²

Berrigan's Attitude towards Historic Jesuit Missions

Berrigan's efforts to influence the production of *The Mission* and various themes in his book about the product become particularly meaningful when one is cognizant of his attitude towards the history of his order's missionary enterprise, especially its *reducciones* amongst the Guaraní. In this matter the maverick priest made no effort to cover his tracks; indeed, he quite explicitly commented on the matter in his published journal. Berrigan's remarks are found in both disjointed snippets and longer sections in which he outlined aspects of that history, about which he evidently did secondary research.

We must first consider Berrigan's attitudes towards his order's historical rôle generally before turning to its part on the mission field. It should be emphasised at the outset that his occasional clashes with the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church did not signify dissatisfaction with the Society of Jesus. For that matter, for centuries many members of Catholic religious orders have found themselves in conflicts with their diocesan superiors and have evinced primary loyalty to their societies rather than to bishops. Describing a conversation with Jeremy Irons in

Colombia in which he had sought to answer that actor's query "Who are the Jesuits and what is it like to be one?", Berrigan conceded that "in my worst hours, it appears to me that the Jesuits were created by a kind of necessity in nature, a spontaneous generation occurring in Western culture itself". Yet he did not regard his order as merely an historical accident. It was "a muscular arm of the post-Reformation church" whose "outreach was to be primarily 'spiritual'". Berrigan immediately clarified this point, however, stressing that early on Jesuits defined "spiritual" in various ways which tended to veer away from ethereal, otherworldly ones. "The definition, as a matter of history, would be at times worldly, practical, and visionary".¹³

Berrigan acknowledged that the historical undertaking had long been controversial, that "much ink has been spent in defending or attacking the passionate 'missionary urge' of the Jesuits". Clearly, he did not condone every aspect of it with all his heart, mind, and soul. Among other things, it bothered this cleric, who was keenly aware of the unsavory consequences of the alliance of the Roman Catholic Church and conservative political regimes in many Latin American countries, that one of the Jesuits' colonial "ambiguities" was that their endeavours were a case of "the cross following the flag", the former borne by "enthusiastic royalists".¹⁴

Berrigan also recognised that the cultural prejudices of the Jesuits in colonial Latin America contributed to their imperfection as missionaries. He could not deny their general attitude of condescension towards the Guaraní. "I must also report that I detect in the quotes from the original missionaries a whiff of arrogance, even of contempt for the Indians", Berrigan conceded, "once the subject of 'intelligence' is raised. What the padres extolled (in themselves) and mourned the absence of in the Indians was evidently their (extremely limited) cultural understanding of the term, European, abstract and scholastic". In this vein, Berrigan obliquely broached a common theme in the criticism of colonial discourse, namely that of the indelible otherness of subjugated peoples. To many participants in the broad European imperialistic undertaking since the sixteenth century, it was an unchallenged truth that Africans, Asians, and the indigenous ethnic groups of the Americas were congenitally different from Europeans, and that nothing could be done to bridge the gap separating the respective races. Any efforts to "uplift" or "refine" such peoples, according to this attitude, are doomed to failure and can yield at most

a European veneer which merely disguises their essential and innate foreignness. Berrigan considered this, albeit very briefly, when he argued the matter of Jesuit missionary appreciation of Guaraní musicianship and manual skills. “But what, one is inclined to inquire, is one to make of the extraordinary musical and artistic talents of the Indians?” he asked rhetorically. “And might it not be further argued that an intemperate judgment on them and their capacities actually inhibited further possibilities, indeed implied that an arbitrary norm had been planted in mission ground, a wall, a boundary? ‘Them’ and ‘us,’ and never the twain shall be one”. Drawing an illuminating contemporary analogy, Berrigan noted that such “preemption” had prevailed within the Society of Jesus itself. “Early decisions are made as to what a Jesuit is capable of, decisions that peg him to earth for a lifetime”. He did not provide specific illustrations of this typing but made clear his conviction that it was utterly dehumanising. “To describe the ruin that ensues[,] one would have to assemble images from a theater of cruelty or absurdity, or from Beckett - someone stuck up to his neck in (rapidly or slowly) hardening cement”.¹⁵

To Berrigan, however, these lamentable sides of the Jesuit missionary undertaking in South America could be attributed to the fact that his fraternal predecessors were “sons of their time”. By and large he lauded the Jesuits of the colonial era as heroes worthy of emulation, were that possible, by their counterparts in the twentieth century. “We latter-day Jesuits, lesser sons of giants, are grateful for a mere gleam of greatness”, Berrigan confessed. “We know our scope, how miniscule [*sic*] it is. We know the humiliating contrast that exists between ourselves and our noble forebears”.¹⁶

Berrigan spilled much more ink lauding both the nobility of Jesuit missions and praising their individual accomplishments than apologising for their political captivity and other shortcomings. His litany of commendations was succinct and hardly understated:

In any case, the good things astonish. Churches were built that rivaled the splendor of European cathedrals; streets were paved; the miserable hand-to-mouth existence of the Indians yielded to a settled rhythm of harvest and planting. Add to these the singers and musicians and builders of instruments who delighted sophisticated European visitors. Also add

flourishing trade, and communications by road and river far exceeding anything in existence in the same areas today.

Not content with presenting this catalogue of achievements, Berrigan stated several others, not uniformly accurately: “No capital punishment in the *reducciones*, as the new, protected settlements came to be known. Also no currency, no private property. In sum, no mere aping of European societal arrangements”. To this Jesuit writer, it seemed at least arguable that these were the fruits of the vows taken by the missionaries who guided this experiment in colonial Latin America: “And could it be that the denial of pride of place to possessions, egoism, and lethal sanctions was the mysterious source of every good thing that followed?” he asked.¹⁷ Lest any reader had forgotten, Berrigan returned to this theme of Jesuit missionary feats some thirty pages later. “They created biblical ‘new cities,’ brought new skills and comprehensions and utter courage to bear on the tragic fate of the Indians”, he wrote of the order’s trailblazers in South America. “They combated dishonor, distemper, and the disincarnate, so-called faith of Christians who had renounced all recognizable claim to that title”.¹⁸ With this almost fawning attitude, it is no surprise that Berrigan dedicated his book “To the Jesuits for life”.

Berrigan’s Attitudes towards Liberation Theology in Latin America

That the film *The Mission* is *inter alia* a self-conscious tribute to classic Latin American liberation theology and, even more so, the struggle of many South and Central American clergymen against social and political conservatism in their regions, is beyond dispute. Nowhere is this more evident than in the epilogue which appears on the screen recognising the contemporary endeavours of such individuals. On the surface, one might surmise that Berrigan, as an internationally known political activist who had spent part of 1984 in Central America and who maintained close ties with many similarly active Catholic priests and lay people there, would have been a strong advocate of liberation theology who exercised a determinative influence on this aspect of *The Mission*. That, however, does not appear to have been the case, at least not in any simplistic sense.

This is the inescapable conclusion one reaches after reading Berrigan's candid generalisations about liberation theology as such in his published diary. His most explicit comments on the matter occur late in the work, especially in a section dated Tuesday, August 13. Yet even his remarks here are partially cryptic. Berrigan noted obliquely, "Reading the liberation theologians of Latin America, with varied reactions". His definite article is, no doubt, an unconscious exaggeration. By 1985 more than a dozen liberation theologians in that region had gained international prominence, and theological conservatives in the Vatican had begun to place many of their written works under their inquisitorial loupe. They had discovered, as had many other theologians, that the liberationists of South and Central America differed markedly in terms of their adherence to conventional Catholic doctrine, use of Marxist conceptual frameworks and vocabulary, political and ideological views, and other matters. Hence, anyone wishing to analyse Berrigan's "reactions" immediately confronts a wall of imprecision. In a sense, of course, this harmonises well with his declaration that he responded variously to their works.

What is beyond dispute, however, is that Berrigan's recorded impressions reveal his basis in more conventional Roman Catholic theology, notwithstanding his frequent criticism of the institutional church. Orthodoxy is the touchstone with which he assays the nuggets liberation theologians had presented to the reading public for more than a decade, and, like Shakespeare in *The Merchant of Venice*, Berrigan found that not all that glistened was gold. One of their chief weaknesses, he believed, was an excessive reliance on human nature rather than on divine imperative and initiative. This countered his orthodox understanding of the essentially sinful nature of humanity:

But it seems to me that certain of the liberationists are as tempted as anyone else to become obsessive Pelagians¹⁹ - theorists of the "one way," our way. Jargon is a rather accurate sign that the dust of Pelagianism is in the air, as though "liberation," understood in all manner of idealistic, cultural, economic, or quasi-military ways, were equivalent to the banishment of original sin and sinful structures.

What appears to have piqued Berrigan more than anything else in this regard was the subjectivity of much liberationist thinking and, concomitantly, its minimising of the transcendence and initiative of God. The substitutes which some liberation theologians offered for conventional theistic language, in his view, were not “particularly reassuring” but smacked of “pantheism, Pelagianism, reductionism, Gnosticism”. Berrigan cited what he regarded as entirely inadequate and indeed ridiculous metaphors for conventional God-talk to underscore his point:

In place of the personal God, one is offered a sampling of the following: (and I quote) “Task,” “Revolution,” “Force,” “Motivation,” “Horizon,” and (yes) “Omega Point,” and (I swear it) “Shining Dots,” “The Great Exclamation Point,” and [*sic*] “Exuberent Yes.” I ask myself, in a laudable effort to identify the “fetishes” by which we live today, which we adore - do we have here anything more than a flea market of little idols, idolettes, so to speak?

Berrigan would have performed a noteworthy service to students of liberation theology had he taken the time to identify the theologians to whom he was referring. Instead, however, he treated them collectively and, with a single exception, anonymously. The sole theologian whom Berrigan named in this regard was Juan Casanas, a Spaniard whose references to “other images” he found “destitute . . . and even ridiculous”.²⁰

Berrigan emphasised that he did not speak as an inflexible defender of orthodoxy as such, stressing instead his conviction that his critique of liberation theology rested on his Biblical faith. Referring to Catholic theologians in general, he wrote in words more typical - at least according to popular perceptions - of much Protestant thought than that of the Church of Rome: “Once they leave the Bible, they lose me. I don’t write this to huff and puff about orthodoxy or heterodoxy or anyone’s doxy. Maybe I write about tested and governing images versus romanticism or activism or passivism - or any ‘ism’ at all”. In a variation of a recurrent theme, Berrigan then contrasted the spiritual superficiality of both liberation theologians and twentieth-century Catholics in general with his fraternal forebears depicted in *The Mission*: “We stumble about witlessly, selling ourselves short with ersatz ‘theologizing,’

foreign as we are to the faith of (to make a near point) these Jesuits of the eighteenth century".²¹

Notwithstanding Berrigan's severe and only obliquely qualified criticism of liberation theology, he shared many of the concerns of its exponents with regard to social and economic injustice in Latin America. This long-standing anguish is also evident in his diary, although it does not appear to have made a noteworthy impact on his advisory work for *The Mission*. Again and again Berrigan availed himself of opportunities to inspect social conditions near the sites of filming in Colombia, Argentina, and Paraguay. The legacy of Alfredo Stroessner, the son of German immigrants who had become president of the last-named country following a military coup in 1954 and was then still in power, was profoundly distasteful to him. On a visit to a border town which he labelled "a tacky free-for-all", Berrigan remarked to Jeremy Irons that "the atmosphere here turns one into a swine. One should snoop about on all fours, going 'oink, oink'".²² He also noticed the destructive impact which economic exploitation was having on the environment. Berrigan and another member of the Gold Crest team went on an excursion in Colombia and, in what the former called "a bizarre and disturbing episode", witnessed impoverished fishermen casting sticks of dynamite into the sea to kill fish, a practice which is banned in many countries and which environmentalists universally regard as wanton and indiscriminate destruction of the natural habitat. Berrigan analysed it as "a desperate last-ditch measure of the poor, seeking food" and pointed out that in addition to destroying the coral reefs offshore, some of the men directly involved had wreaked havoc on themselves. More than one had mutilated hands apparently because of accidents in handling the explosives. In another area, the present even exploited the past. Berrigan and some of his colleagues made an outing to a "lost city" and heard with dismay that their host, whom he did not identify in his diary, had laid plans "with mad seriousness endemic to his kind", to construct a cable car line stretching forty kilometres to the archaeological site. "At that point, the eyes of my mind slammed closed like iron shutters", the piqued Berrigan recalled graphically. "Here, in full panoply, effrontery and irresponsibility were at one. And the public be damned. And the lost city twice doomed".²³

A rare respite from the continent's deeply ingrained systematic exploitation came in a conversation with an Argentinean bishop, who "had established a protected

village for some twelve hundred Guaraní Indians modeled on the old Jesuit *reducciones*. There he is careful to respect their rites and symbols and beliefs, an evangelizing patience and respect". Not surprisingly, Berrigan confessed, "I liked him immensely".²⁴ Similarly, after two of his fellow Jesuits named Francisco and Antonio escorted him to a slum in Cartagena, he confided, "I'm moved beyond words when I encounter Jesuits who live and work in the midst of the poor".²⁵

Berrigan's observations of social inequalities and economic exploitation in South America contrasted strongly with those he made about living conditions in the film company. A certain degree of guilt consequently arose in him, and it came to expression on several pages of his diary. In one early instance, after attending a six-course dinner to mark the launching of filming in Colombia, and remarking in a poem about the occasion that on location "class distinctions [are] honored like ten commandments at a punctilious port royal", Berrigan wrote that he thought "constantly" about "our dear ones in prison, those dying in the hospice at St. Vincent's in New York, the homeless women at Holy Name Shelter". Those personal affiliations, he declared, were "my landmarks, my seamarks, my very sanity". Other contrasts also abounded in Berrigan's perceptions of conditions and phenomena in Latin America, including places far from the venues where *The Mission* was produced. Some of these he linked to other motifs in his diary. Berrigan commented very favourably on the activities of the late Archbishop Oscar Romero of Nicaragua and with explicit pride noted that the Jesuits of that country had supported those efforts in the interest of social justice. He perceived signs of progress and hope in Nicaragua, whose "church and society are far more biblically true to love of God and neighbor than the piratical politics of the United States".²⁶

The social inequalities as well as the political and economic exploitation which Berrigan witnessed in South and Central America contrasted sharply with what he perceived as the ironic political ignorance of the actors and other personnel whom Gold Crest employed to produce *The Mission*. He was careful to nuance his evaluation of them, however. "The political and religious understanding of the actors is quite uneven, I would judge, with the women far ahead of the men", Berrigan observed. What appeared to disappoint him most in this regard was not the ignorance but the callous indifference of so many of the latter. Even when he broached the then current topic of the proliferation of nuclear weapons in Britain the response was

at best mixed: "I talk of Greenham Common and our people in prison and describe our actions and discuss nonviolence, and the women nod with understanding while the men glance past or nervously light up a smoke".²⁷ A British Jesuit whom Gold Crest had engaged to participate in the filming irked Berrigan more than anyone else on location. In the eyes of his American counterpart, he was an unenlightened conservative who, in addition to engaging in interminable "nitpicking" about certain religious details, "makes no secret of his approval of capital punishment, war, military service, and Ms. Thatcher's treatment of the poor in Britain".²⁸ The two Jesuits, to use a phrase presumably more familiar to the British one, were thus like chalk and cheese with regard to matters of social ethics.

Berrigan's contrasting respect for the indigenous peoples of Latin America, emotional attachment to them, and keen awareness of their plight in exploitative, multicultural societies clearly made a decisive impact on his perception of the production of *The Mission* and the film itself. Throughout his diary he commented favourably on the Guaraní and other native peoples of South and Central America and disparagingly on their economic exploitation. As will be seen shortly, Berrigan thought so strongly about the latter that he openly questioned the moral legitimacy of the filming process without, however, reaching a categorical conclusion about it or his own participation in the venture.

A few of Berrigan's remarks about the indigenes will illustrate his general attitude towards them as well as his perception of their situation as poorly paid supernumeraries. He was too sophisticated a theologian and too perceptive an observer to entertain any Edenic illusions about the hundreds of Onani men, women, and children whom Gold Crest hired in Colombia. While Berrigan could generalise that "the men are invariably superb physical specimens", he noted that "the women are, in great contrast, prematurely aged, by all accounts, from prodigious childbearing". The state of the latter, he suspected, might also be attributed to the grief over the deaths of so many of their offspring in a society with a high rate of infant mortality. This gender-qualified perception did not prevent him from praising the natural musicality of the Onani on location and the "immaculately clean" village they constructed as a temporary abode during the filming. Personal hygiene and emotional well-being seemed to go hand-in-hand: "They bathe several times each day in the river, making of each event a kind of fiesta, everyone joking and splashing

about and making great ado with the children". To Berrigan, it seemed evident that their "sense of dignity" could not be overlooked, "even by the veriest lout". The Onani also treated him and his colleagues to a display of "the most beautiful and diverse dancing". In the light of this appreciation of the indigenes, it seemed even more important to Berrigan, and to some of the other Europeans and North Americans involved in the production, to avoid conveying a condescending stereotype of the Guaraní in the film.²⁹

Not long after Berrigan arrived in Cartagena, it became obvious to him that Gold Crest was exploiting the Onani supernumeraries it had flown in from elsewhere in Colombia. The way in which this was being done seemed especially repulsive, as it both deprived them of their dignity and then paraded them before the world. This came into particularly sharp relief during the filming of a scene in which captured Guaraní were marched through the streets of Asunción: "It is the poor of the world, of Colombian favellas [sic], who are on horrid display here. The Indian extras, noble as they are, and pitiable in their dignity, are existential stand-ins. Fact, fiction, symbol - all three". Berrigan wondered whether these poorly remunerated actors compared their lot to that of the historical people whom they were playing. The physical conditions they had to endure on the set irked his conscience. He noted that at one time, which was not necessarily an exception in Colombia's climate, the Onani were compelled to stand "in the sparse shade of a grove of trees" for an unspecified number of hours in temperatures exceeding forty degrees Celsius before the camera even began to roll. Given these circumstances, Berrigan thought it not at all surprising that many of them eventually staged a strike. This Jesuit observer described sympathetically the immediate causes: "It developed that they were furious - at the lateness of the hour, the wearisome, repetitive shooting of scenes involving the small children, mothers, and old folk, who should have been long since in their beds". Purely financial grievances heightened the dissatisfaction of the Onani: "They were also angry at the violation of their contract, according to which their work should have been agreeably completed days before. Therefore, more money for more work".³⁰

Berrigan continued to reflect on the matter of cinematographic exploitation in his diary during his months in Colombia and could not escape the conclusion that the venture in which he was participating was essentially one of greed, despite

the film's potential for communicating dimensions of the Gospel. "Why do we delve into history to recreate a lost paradise, entering a foreign country and time, armed with sabers and old cannons, meantime employing 'the natives' only as 'extras' to the actors, who are themselves foreigners?" he asked. Stripping away whatever residual self-delusion may have survived his first several weeks on location, he concluded that "any realistic appraisal of our connection with the Indians and [other] impoverished Colombians must be seen as that of master to slave, in a deadly economic sense". For that matter, Berrigan questioned whether the entire exercise had been a misuse of his time. To him, it seemed reasonable to evaluate this question partly in terms of what benefits had accrued to him, not merely in terms of what he could contribute through the medium of the cinema. "I am gaining almost nothing, if I compare my sojourn here with last year's exposure to the realities of Central America", he admitted. Berrigan confessed that the rationale he had given his Jesuit superiors in requesting permission to leave New York for several months to participate in the venture ("a way of saying thank you to the Jesuits") seemed contrived in retrospect. That he had genuine gratitude seems plausible, and indeed his diary, as we have noted, contains numerous expressions of it. The question to Berrigan had become whether his advisory rôle in *The Mission* was itself a legitimate expression. "But a thank-you must be more than an exercise in nostalgia or dependence, whether to the Order or to the past", he explained.³¹

Having dedicated his published diary to the members of the Society of Jesus, Berrigan paid his respects to the people whom he regarded as the real heroes of the film by concluding the volume with a tribute to them. The "wrapup party" in Argentina was held in a venue which he described as both an "utterly characterless ballroom" and "an inflated Kafkaesque prison cell". In this unlovely venue, Joffé delivered a brief speech acknowledging the special contribution of the Onani supernumeraries. He then summoned to the fore the three who had been invited to attend the festivities as representatives of the rest. The director called them "friends who made our film come to life". Berrigan concurred fully with these words. "Amen to that!" he declared. "And alleluia too!"³²

Berrigan's Evaluation of the Filming of *The Mission*

Berrigan's many comments about *The Mission* which he recorded as it unfolded in Colombia and Argentina shed additional light on the film he helped to shape. Indeed, these remarks provide rare insight into the project and the multiplicity of political and religious outlooks which its formulators represented. They also augment our understanding of the difficulties which almost invariably arise when such ideas and attitudes are submitted to the limitations of the cinematographic medium.

In considering Berrigan's overall impressions of *The Mission* and his critiques of some of its scenes which he perceived to be pivotal, it is significant that during the four months of filming he wrestled with the underlying question of the effective purpose of the cinema. Shortly after arriving in Cartagena, he recorded his doubts about this. "Indeed, has any film in history made us (makers or viewers) more apt for spiritual or social change?" Berrigan asked. He wondered whether "films today [are] only another example of the triumph of widening technique" and asked whether they were merely "an example of questionable means over ethical ends". In a graphic example of his cynicism, Berrigan called *The Battle of Algiers* "one of the noblest examinations on record of the conquest of the oppressor by the moral superiority of the oppressed". When he had seen that film at a cinema near Columbia University in New York City, however, students in attendance from that prestigious Ivy League institution had "raised a gross cheer every time a bomb went off in restaurant [*sic*] or market". Without giving the source of his information, Berrigan added that after the showing "these ersatz warriors in Plato's cave returned beyond doubt to their stereos and pot sessions".³³ He appears to have found some emotional and intellectual relief a few months later when, near the end of the filming in Argentina, some members of the crew assured him that "such and such a film had made a difference in the direction life took". Even these assurances, though, seemed compromised by the fact that they came from the lips of people who "have what might be called a vested interest in voting that good times follow on their efforts".³⁴

Berrigan's perception of *The Mission*, both in its embryonic stage and after its birth, can be best comprehended if one first considers his attitudes towards the cinema in general, especially its prevailing manifestations during the 1980s. Berrigan

trumpeted his displeasure with the state of film-making at that time, although he did so in such oblique terms that it is difficult to pinpoint the reasons and scope of his discontent. Not long after arriving on location in Cartagena, he confided to his diary his fear that *The Mission* might become “another instance in which massive horror has become the texture of life itself”. Berrigan appears to have had misgivings about this film following closely in the wake of Joffé’s *The Killing Fields*. This advocate of international peace confessed that he had been “beaten about mercilessly” by the violence in that piece and wondered whether *The Mission* might do little more “than further stupefy a sluggish people already in lockstep”. If it did, Berrigan believed, it would be a typical work of modern cinematography. “Fully nine-tenths of the current film offerings, to judge them charitably[,] are either at odds with the health of the mind or are of no significance one way or another: *Free Day in the Fun House*”. Popular existentialism on the screen also failed to impress Berrigan, who asserted that most films “amount to a perverse celebration of infirmity and incapacity”. The hopelessness they portrayed ran counter to his Christian belief in hope. In such portrayals of despair, he believed, “the human is throttled, slowly or speedily. Death is gloried in. The glory is spectacle, expenditure on a grand scale, technique gone wild, trickery and quackery, the shortcut of violence”. Berrigan admitted that if nothing else, films of that pseudophilosophical bent reflected a major dimension of reality in their depictions of the modern worldly spirit. Asking rhetorically whether they “merely follow the cultural drift”, he concluded that “very few are capable of offering a contrary vision”. To illustrate the point in a much too cursory manner, Berrigan broached what he - in harmony with many other critics - regarded as a general spiritual devolution in the works of Ingmar Bergman. “They started with a stunning mythological search, through long reaches of history, for meaning, for God, for symbols that might illumine the human predicament”, he summarised. “And they offer us, of late years, chic Swedish living rooms, where a modern couple occupy themselves in psychologically rending one another limb from limb”.³⁵

Turning from fears of violence to those of spiritual irrelevance in which the ethical message would be sacrificed on the altar of spectacle, Berrigan thought of *The Mission* that “its grandiosities can easily swamp the best efforts of its leading actors, humans whose choices place them in opposing fields of force, testing their

human fiber and fidelity". In an utterly critical and highly revealing passage, he asked rhetorically, "Are not these the point, the only justification of this immense effort?"³⁶

Though by no means a theoretician of the cinema, Berrigan offered other comments about it in general, at times relating them in both theological and artistic terms to the endeavour in which he was participating. The telescoping of a century and a half of historical reality into a presentation of approximately two hours' duration he conceded was an "impossibility" and "absurd". In virtually the same breath, however, Berrigan described as "sublime" the ability of this medium to "create such images as will capture and convey vast portions of time and space" and the fact that "the actors can be brought to a pitch of comprehension and be lit so vividly that moments, hints, phrases, mere parts will convey the resonant whole". Though impressed by this intersection of human creativity and technical sophistication, he understood equally well the subjective *conditio sine qua non* in order for communication to take place. Before the intended message can be conveyed, especially with regard to the severe encapsuling of time and space, "the fiction . . . must exist also in the eye of the beholder". Yet this posed no problem in the twentieth century, despite the radical contrast between the rapid pace of events on the screen and what Berrigan called "the ever so slow trudge of the human". Ever the theologian, he drew a homiletical analogy between this artistic acceleration and divine grace in bridging the gap between the human and the divine. "Can it be that the ascent toward God, understood as a lifelong, difficult trek, has become, through the Miracle of the Wondrous Eye, both cheap and available, your friendly neighborhood commodity in fact?" Berrigan asked rhetorically. "Is a film a species of wonder drug?" In the end he doubted it, concluding with no mean understatement that "maybe a glimpse is only a glimpse after all, and not to be confused with such weighty matters as the human trek, the exodus from enslavement toward grace and glory. Maybe, in other words, we can be modest even about the achievement of our immodest technology".³⁷

A few weeks into the filming, it became apparent to Berrigan that if the film were to meet expectations, it must deal with a number of questions which the historical phenomenon portrayed posed but which were absent from the script. He recorded in his diary that these were matters which did not necessarily have succinct

answers, that they might “hang in the air if they so choose”. Berrigan gave five examples of such questions, all of which would arguably be of greater interest to specialists in missiology (a subject in which Robert Bolt presumably had little general interest) than their counterparts in social ethics, especially with regard to imperialism and relations between church and state:

For example, what qualities in the missionaries met and won the hearts of the Indians?

What mingling of truthfulness and sound tactic worked the human wonder of the *reducciones* - the unlettered native artisans and the schoolmen of Europe together creating a community of justice, dignity, and peace?

And what images and rhythms convey the impalpables of faith, moral coherence, and cultural adaptiveness?

And perhaps most important of all, how did the missionaries confront death and the destruction of their dream? How did they confront their own death, coming toward them relentlessly (in loneliness, privation, the long march) and then arriving in total catastrophe?³⁸

These are questions which theologically informed reviewers might well have asked upon seeing *The Mission*, although in the dozens of reviews examined in the research for the present study there are only a few hints of them. In any case, these issues are, for the most part, either ignored in the film or only cursorily referred to therein. Berrigan nowhere in his book explicitly stated that *The Mission* failed to meet his expectations with these questions, which he clearly regarded as central to the fulfilment of its potential. Nevertheless, despite his general lauding of certain aspects of the film’s merits, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the failure of either Bolt’s script or Joffé’s direction to wrestle with these points, which probably were not concerns to them as they were to Berrigan, significantly lowered the film in the estimation of their Jesuit advisor.

Yet Berrigan was sufficiently circumspect in his published diary not to pass categorical final judgement on *The Mission*. In lieu of an overarching evaluation, one finds *inter alia* incisive comments about the creation of three scenes, all of which he believed were pivotal. The fact that Berrigan regarded them as crucial

reflects both his essentially religious commitment and calling as a Roman Catholic priest and his perception of the film as primarily a theological and spiritual study, and secondarily a political and ethical one, though undoubtedly he would deny that these two pairings are mutually exclusive. Furthermore, he thought that the intensely spiritual and personal scenes were a necessary complement to the grandeur of the natural setting and the macrocosmic historical breadth of *The Mission*. Berrigan lauded the technical achievements of Joffé and chief cameraman Chris Menges, but he cautioned that “if the film is not to fall of its own top-heavy splendors, it must contain a counterweight (or better, weightlessness) so that it soars aloft like a winged throne. Soul must shine through”.³⁹ Berrigan saw a tripartite complement in three major scenes, namely 1) the confrontation between the guilt-ridden Rodrigo Mendoza and Father Gabriel in Asunción, 2) the forgiveness of Mendoza and the ending of his penance atop Iguazu Falls, and 3) Father Gabriel’s symbolic procession with the ciborium during the invasion of the San Carlos Mission. In each case Berrigan was dissatisfied with Bolt’s script and regarded it as incumbent upon himself to seek to adapt it. In all three instances, his comments vary from cryptic to fleeting; nowhere did he provide a lengthy analysis of the demerits of Bolt’s text or the need to modify it.

Our necessarily brief consideration of the development of these three scenes as seen through Berrigan’s eyes can proceed sequentially, although they were not filmed in chronological order and consequently are discussed out of sequence in Berrigan’s diary. He described Father Gabriel’s initial meeting with Mendoza in Asunción as “the Great Pivotal Scene upon Which All Depends” but thought that “something becomes painfully apparent about Robert Bolt’s text as it touches on this scene”. The inadequacies in it, however, are less obvious to the reader of Berrigan’s book, although it seems most plausible that he believed Bolt had been unrealistically verbose. He asserted of the screenwriter that “he demands all manner of convolutions to fill in the emotional spaces between words, so syncopated is the text”. Undoubtedly comparing the dialogue with his experience in dealing with mortal sinners under highly emotionally charged circumstances, Berrigan employed a stretched metaphor to illustrate in general terms the difficulty at hand, stating that “the dance is so choreographed as to demand impossible leaps against all laws, whether of gravity or grace”. Rather than providing details of the script, he

catalogued some of the questions which he believed were not answered in it but which Irons and De Niro had to answer through their acting skills:

Does the Jesuit have a sense of scoring merit here, as he wrestles for the sanity and soul of Mendoza? Is he invoking formulas of airy forgiveness as a cover for his own human emptiness? And again, does there exist in Father Gabriel, a sense that he is not not [*sic*] altogether unlike the remorseful killer languishing before him? And if such a sense is alien to him, is not the Jesuit indictable for a form of pharisaism? Also, does he feel depleted, or exhilarated, by this encounter of wits and hearts, this wrestling match between the demonic and the Holy Spirit? Is he crowing inwardly at scoring points, or is there a sense of being the lowly instrument of grace and truth?⁴⁰

To some viewers, these questions might seem little more than theological speculation. To Berrigan, however, they were crucial to the significance and meaning of *The Mission*. Moreover, as he understood his task to be that of advising Joffé and the actors on matters pertaining to Jesuit spirituality and practices, they were entirely relevant, as was Joffé's request that he take Irons on a spiritual retreat immediately before filming got underway. In harmony with that precedent, Berrigan suggested to Irons that they fast together on the day when that scene was filmed. The British actor accepted this proposal. Furthermore, Berrigan remarked with apparent gratification that both the actors and the director concurred with his reaction to the script. This advisor appears to have been satisfied with the result. After five takes, he told Irons, "That says everything - aura, bodily gesture, conviction, coherence, simplicity". Seen from his priestly perspective, Berrigan wrote that "a new center is created; within its burning glass is the exorcising of loneliness, remorse, and despair by an overwhelming and merciful courage . . . [*sic*]"⁴¹.

Berrigan wrote no less as a priest in making several illuminating comments about the scene in which Mendoza culminates his penance and, immediately after being relieved of his burden of armaments by a knife-wielding Guaraní, becomes aware of God's grace. Berrigan saw in this segment a microcosm of the drama of individual salvation. It was clearly a *kairos*: "Mendoza be damned or Mendoza

be saved". Berrigan found it theologically significant that in Bolt's script, the missionaries played no rôle in the erstwhile slave-trader's conversion and penance; Mendoza's spiritual pilgrimage is a matter between himself and God. No Jesuit, Berrigan emphasises, even attempts to influence the form of Mendoza's penitential act. This Spanish-born exploiter of the Guaraní, "as long as his wretchedness animates him, will drag through the jungle the weight of his sin: a clanking net filled with the mementos of his lurid glory, halbert [*sic*], sword, helmet, leggings, breastplate". What Berrigan did not mention, however, is that in the film a Jesuit implores Father Gabriel to intervene and halt the act of contrition, but the latter refuses to do so.⁴²

More questionably, Berrigan suggests that this scene is a postfigurative one of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. "Mendoza, by atavism and instinct, keeps moving, keeps to a spoor, keeps within sight and sound of his (relatively) unimpeded friends", he observed. "He struggles with fatalism and fierce gusto up that mountain of torment, that Calvary. The heat, the bugs, the burden - the Passion of Christ?"⁴³ Only Berrigan's question mark arguably saves this theologically and artistically debatable comparison. The undermining contrast between Mendoza's penance and the passion of Christ is that Mendoza is a mortal sinner who has many murders on his conscience, whereas in nearly every Christian theological tradition, including that of the Roman Catholic Church, Jesus Christ is free from sin but has taken upon himself the sins of the world. Mendoza is striving against the enormous odds posed by his predatory moral and emotional frailty to accept the grace of God and thus escape perdition; Christ, by contrast, embodies divine assurance of salvation from the outset and has lived and dies for others. This is so well known as to rule out interpreting Mendoza as a symbolic Christ figure in any but the most distant and incomplete sense. Berrigan's remarks in this regard, though expressed cautiously, illustrate yet again the difficulties posed by attempts to create postfigurative Christ figures.⁴⁴

The third scene which Berrigan regarded as definitive for the success of *The Mission* (and, one must assume, for its contemporary ethical relevance) is that in which Father Gabriel, carrying the ciborium, leads a procession of the faithful out of the burning church at San Carlos after the Spanish and Portuguese mercenaries have attacked that building. Berrigan apparently played a determinative rôle in the

recreation of this scene. He wrote shortly after arriving at Cartagena that Joffé and Puttnam were “on the prowl for a better ending for the film than the one provided by Robert Bolt’s script”. In that ageing text, Bolt had constructed a dichotomous and arguably wooden ethical plot in which two Jesuit missionaries join the Guaraní in resisting the advance of the Spanish and Portuguese mercenaries. Two others, meanwhile, submit to Altamirano’s orders, given under threat of excommunication, and return to Asunción. Father Gabriel and, by extension, his congregation, are entirely passive in the face of the military onslaught. They are all massacred while praying in the mission church. The roof of that building literally falls in on them, an act whose symbolism may have been intentional. This rubbed the fur of the politically active Berrigan the wrong way. As he described the original scene disparagingly, “All this, we concluded, would never do”. He explained that it reduced his Jesuit forebear to “someone unable to imagine a gesture of faith and political consequence”. (It may have irked him especially that the minor character he was playing, Father Sebastian, was one of those who submitted to Altamirano’s authority and abandoned the Guaraní in their hour of dire need.) Unarticulated in this judgement, but implicit in his argumentation about the unsatisfactory scene, was that it also swept away the fundamental Christian notion of hope. To Berrigan’s relief, he discovered that both Joffé and Puttnam were flexible about the matter and did not regard Bolt’s text as “writ in stone”. In the process of redrafting it, he drew heavily on his own experience, his “checkered past”, as a political activist. The American’s memories of his involvement in the American civil rights movement during the 1960s inspired him as he sought to create a more dynamic ending which would leave viewers with a vision relevant to their own faith. The goal, Berrigan believed, was to “come up with an image of hope and risk, all in favor of liberation - of both Jeremy and his people”. There was no consensus, however, on how this could be achieved, so a “perplexed discussion” continued between Berrigan, Puttnam, and Joffé. “Are we to concede, as in the theology of [John] Milton, that evil had best be granted the last word, that the evildoer is essentially more interested than the virtuous?” asked the animated priest. He admitted that a subjective factor, or perhaps hope, prompted his efforts to create what he called “a better fate” for Father Gabriel, and that by implication he hoped to “imagine something better by way of life and life’s ending for ourselves”. “We have to get him out of the church,

where the author had condemned him to a kind of Catholic *Götterdämmerung*. Not away from the church, but out of the church". Berrigan found in the careers of Martin Luther King and Mohandas K. Gandhi part of the answer. Foreshadowing their commitments, Father Gabriel would thus be "extricated from a passive fate". Rather than remaining in the chapel, this missionary would go forth, bearing the elements of the Holy Eucharist (which in Roman Catholic theology, it will be recalled, implied the presence of God incarnate in Jesus Christ) while leading his flock in a procession. The missionary priest "will not be destroyed in secret or in hiding", Berrigan emphasised. "His death will be a political act, which is to say, responsible, accountable". To Berrigan, this action by Father Gabriel would bring the forces of good and evil to a fitting and incisive confrontation in a grand finale: "So doing, he confronts the worst and evokes the best in the massed adversaries, renegade Indians, and mercenaries". One "central" difficulty remained in this solution, namely the solitude of Father Gabriel in the scene. What of his fellow Jesuits? Berrigan understood that the other members of the order at the mission had taken orders of obedience to him and that, apart from the decision by the novice Mendoza to regress into violence, the film has emphasised Jesuit solidarity, not factiousness. Suddenly, however, all abandon their superior in an action vaguely reminiscent of Peter's denial of Christ. In Berrigan's words, "They do this in spite of all the talk, prayer, and images of community that have preceded, creating as they have a strong impression that the priests are bonded one to another in life and death". To relieve this tension, Berrigan proposed that his character (Father Sebastian) and another Jesuit, Alfredo, be filmed packing to leave the mission in preparation to follow Altamirano's orders to return to Asunción. In this scenario, Sebastian would change his mind, remain with Gabriel at the mission, and participate in the concluding processional out of the church.⁴⁵ Apparently Joffé rejected this proposal. Father Gabriel officiates at Mass alone as the soldiers advance on the station, and as the thatch-roofed chapel begins to burn, he alone leads his flock away from that structure. His erstwhile colleague Father Sebastian is not in sight.

Berrigan's Overall Evaluation of *The Mission*

One wonders how Berrigan, given his keen interests in Christian social action in Latin America and in modern literature, would have reviewed *The Mission* had he not participated in its production but been asked to comment on it in, for example, an American Roman Catholic periodical such as *America* or *Commonweal*. While speculation about that hypothetical scenario is arguably bootless, Berrigan made several comments about the film in his published diary which provide insight into his evaluation about the finished product. We have touched on his perceptions of certain segments of it in the present chapter, but what is at issue here is how Berrigan perceived *The Mission* as a finished product, not as an evolving entity.

Berrigan did not mince words in criticising the film's weakness in terms of absolute historicity. He does not appear to have questioned its overarching truth, but clearly he thought that its veracity lay in its artistic merits and in the theological and political messages which it conveyed. *The Mission*, after all, is not a documentary film. Berrigan recognised that as Jesuit history it was a compromised piece, very loosely constructed in Bolt's mind and not resting on exacting research. He conceded that "the film takes considerable license with certain facts" and pointed out that the details of his order's history in South America had suffered under Bolt's free-flowing pen. Berrigan's most glaring example of historical inexactitude in the film is the ordination of a Guaraní who eventually headed a mission station with European Jesuit subordinates. He pointed out that "no Guaraní, we are told on reputable authority, was received in the Order for the hundred-and-fifty-year span of the missions. This is a plain matter of fact. And the film contradicts it, to say the least".⁴⁶

Turning from historicity to the performances of the *personae* in *The Mission*, Berrigan gave them a mixed review. The "main actors", he wrote gratefully without specifying precisely how inclusive his judgement was, "are surpassing mere typecasting". In any case, he appears to have been referring to Irons and De Niro, for in this connection he mentioned the two rôles of "impeccable priest" and "renegade turned Jesuit", although his evaluation might have included the part played by McAnally. In an infrequent pedantic digression, Berrigan explained that "the 'type' is by every count a catastrophe, ricocheting off a 'type' of audience or

society". In this brief section of his diary, he failed to develop what could have been another highly illuminating theme by relating theory to specific case. The reader must therefore attempt to do so on the basis of Berrigan's truncated remarks. They are, however, pithy. "The type is a pernicious opposite number to a saint", he theorised. "The first, a rush toward ego and celebrity, is a kind of revenge of the culture against the living, while the saint offers a model, a realized ideal that becomes, in death, indefinitely fecund". Further delineating the contrast, Berrigan averred that "the type responds to the public appetite for alienation, ideology, and manipulation" while "the saint acts as a source to be emulated by a community of believers".⁴⁷ One could quibble about these generalisations. The essential point, however, is that sainthood entails *inter alia* nonconformity to the world and is therefore not an encapsulation or embodiment of prevailing values or their opposite.

Berrigan also questioned the general depiction of the Jesuits apart from Father Gabriel and the repentant Mendoza. To him these lesser characters, one of whom he played himself, had little plausibility. He did not comment on the credibility of his own Father Sebastian but wrote that "the faces of the 'young Jesuit' extras strike me as quite unprepossessing", a vague adjective which he employed quite liberally in his diary, usually without elaboration. Berrigan called the Jesuits in *The Mission* "street-wise" and "distracted" and contrasted them with "the serenity and recollected sanity of our novices at home". Elsewhere in his diary, though, he gave a different critique of the depiction of the Jesuits. The scene in which Altamirano conducts a hearing in Asunción to determine the fate of the missions struck him as a fundamental distortion with no mean portion of condescension towards his order. Berrigan declared that "the Jesuits emerge from Bolt's text somewhat like disaffected adolescents" but did not explain or seek to prove this charge. Instead, he described the scene as one in which the presiding prelate, as the chief agent of condescension, "for all the world like a tyrannical schoolmaster out of Dickens, is instructed to 'hiss' at the assembled clerics, 'Silence!'" Berrigan's incisive conclusion ridiculed in four words the veracity of the scene: "All a bit much".⁴⁸

The closest Berrigan came to passing a final judgement on *The Mission* was in his evaluation of the interaction of Irons and De Niro in the pivotal scenes of the film, which convey much of its spiritual and ethical message. "Indeed, the value and moral weight of the film depend on the moments these two struggle with",

he declared. Repeatedly, Berrigan underscored the necessity of avoiding simplistic solutions to complicated spiritual and moral questions. In the real world, he knew so well, there is almost invariably painful wrestling before answers are reached. This extended to literary and cinematographic portrayals of the same: "Without such moral agony, dramatized in scenes such as this [*i. e.* those involving the conflict of values between Father Gabriel and Mendoza], deceptively simple, one to one, time[-]consuming (for a few minutes a whole day expended)-without these, the film becomes a fretful, empty, period piece, just like a hundred others, distracting and inhuman". On that score, Berrigan concluded, *The Mission* fared quite well, precisely because it did not offer facile solutions to sedate the minds of those who saw it. Instead, "its task is more rigorous and more modest-to raise questions, to summon the intelligence and evoke the moral capacity of its viewers". Moreover, he judged that the film had an almost universal moral applicability which transcended the time and space of its topic. The theme of *The Mission*, in Berrigan's view, was a *déjà-vu*. "The film", he believed, "is an accurate image of Nicaragua and Afghanistan and Northern Ireland and South Africa. Also of England and America". He based this conviction primarily on the film's rejection of violence, although he did so without quoting Father Gabriel's explicit words to that effect. This American peace advocate painted a verbal picture in which "armies mass from the four winds, determined to 'settle matters'. The absolute justice of this or that cause is invoked-invariably by both sides. War ensues, but the matter to be settled remains as it was, a crisis inviting another sanguinary round".⁴⁹

Critical Reactions

As indicated earlier, apparently in an effort to capitalise on the international publicity which the film was receiving in 1986, *The Mission: A Film Journal* was rushed into print without the careful editing which could have made it a much more coherent book. There is no reason to believe that Harper and Row succeeded in selling many copies of it, and, for that matter, few reviews of the volume appeared. Critical reactions varied greatly. Some reviewers found it disappointing, especially in terms of the light it shed on the production of *The Mission*, while others praised

Berrigan's candour in illuminating the interplay of religious and social issues in the film. Surprisingly, not a single one of the reviews examined in connection with the research for the present study contains anything of note pertaining to the careless editing of the volume.

One of the severest reviews was written by Professor Marshall Deutelbaum of the Department of English at Purdue University. He found it disappointing that after spending four months assisting in the creation of *The Mission*, Berrigan offered "little coherent commentary on its production". Instead, Berrigan had written "intermittent, often vague, and cryptic meditations about matters that worry him, such as the suffering of the Third World and whether any film can ever convey religious thought". Deutelbaum did not question the fundamental legitimacy of such an approach and conceded that the journal dealt with "substantial concerns" but instead of analysing Berrigan's expression of them merely concluded that they were presented in a chaotic and truncated form which diminished their cogency. Hence, without having "an insightful focus" the book was little more than a "boringly self-indulgent jotting".⁵⁰

At the opposite pole of the spectrum of praise and condemnation, David J. Snider, writing in *The Christian Century*, gave readers a summary of the volume's contents and underscored Berrigan's rôle as an adviser to Joffé who, in this capacity, had reshaped parts of Bolt's script. Snider actually devoted more space in his review to the film than to Berrigan's book. Curiously enough, one of his pivotal conclusions is therefore that "with Berrigan's support, the film carefully avoids a moral judgment about the choice between nonviolent and violent resistance, leaving the viewer with the force of that choice". He did not comment negatively on anything in the journal, asserting that it was "an excellent resource for persons who want to see below the surface of *The Mission* to the religious foundations of cultural transformation, past and present".⁵¹

Between these extremes, Gib Johnson wrote ambiguously in *The New York Times* that Berrigan apparently held film-making in low regard and that his attention had seemed to be dominated by such matters as poverty in South America and the plight of imprisoned activists on an international basis. Johnson thought that the potential value of Berrigan's journal would vary from profession to profession:

“Film lovers have no prize here, but students of theology and anthropology may find it more appealing”.⁵²

Conclusion: The Significance of Berrigan

It is not particularly easy to pass judgement on the significance of Daniel Berrigan to the creation of *The Mission* and to its place in the history of the cinema. One immediately confronts the potentially confusing issue of his influence in shaping the film. In this respect, we must conclude that Berrigan's rôle was indeed significant, especially his reforming Bolt's fatalistic conclusion and transforming it into a moment of active courage and symbolic protest rather than a passive acceptance of the destruction of the mission. Less directly, Berrigan's partial acceptance of liberation theology, though unquestionably tempered by his grounding in more conventional Roman Catholic theology, appears to have left its mark on Joffé and possibly other creators of *The Mission*. Whether the most explicit evidence of their interest in liberation theology - the epilogue printed on the screen at the end of the film (a topic to which we shall turn in our chapter about the content of the film) - would have been included had Berrigan not been present is impossible to ascertain.

There is also the question of Berrigan's unfulfilled expectations. As indicated in the present chapter, he approached the task of advising Joffé with certain expectations about the missiological content of the film. Most of these remained unfulfilled. From this viewpoint, then, one could conclude that his impact was considerably less than he initially anticipated. Nevertheless, Berrigan concluded that in some respects, at least, *The Mission* fulfilled its purpose. In his journal, he took only a small part of the credit for this partial success.

Berrigan's published journal is also problematic and probably deserves the mixed reviews it received. In the opinion of the present writer, who shares Berrigan's interests in languages, literature, theology, and missions history, the journal offers many savoury intellectual morsels and provides a fair amount of fragmentary insight into the creation of *The Mission*. Yet it also is a seriously flawed work which does not begin to reach its potential in terms of describing its author's various on and off-camera rôles in *The Mission*, the religious and political positions of Joffé and

his colleagues, the extent to which Bolt's script was modified, the explicit place of liberation theology in the production of the film, and other crucial matters. Berrigan's own evaluation of the final version of the film is in itself quite helpful but, again, falls short of what one might expect from a man who not only was in a position to comment with profound critical shrewdness but also had the intellectual capacity to do so. One can generously attribute these shortcomings in part to the inherent nature of the genre, but that does not exonerate Berrigan's editors at Harper and Row for failing to provide adequate editing and rushing into print what in places are chaotic lucubrations.

Notes

1. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 121.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
4. Clive Barnes, "Theater: Riveting Work by Berrigan", *The New York Times*, 8 February 1971, p. 40.
5. Clive Barnes, "The Stage", *The New York Times*, 16 June 1971, p. 38.
6. "Drama by Berrigan Irks 2 Legislators", *The New York Times*, 30 October 1971, p. 20.
7. "Notes on People", *The New York Times*, 17 August 1971, p. 32.
8. Berrigan, *The Mission: A Film Journal*, p. 12.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 25-26, 29.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 125-139.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 159.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 81.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 46-47.
19. Pelagius (*ca.* 354 - *ca.* 420) was a British Christian whose thought emphasised the primacy of human effort in restoring salvation. After moving to Rome, he was scandalised by the moral laxity of many Roman Christians, which he attributed to a one-sided emphasis on the doctrine of divine grace. To Pelagius, this central teaching effectively reduced human moral responsibility and awareness of the same by placing primary responsibility with God. In contrast to this doctrine, he believed that man must be held responsible for his own good and evil deeds; if not, there would be nothing to restrain him from unbridled indulgence in sin. Nevertheless, and also in contrast to orthodox Roman Catholic doctrine, Pelagius believed in the essential goodness of human

nature. His views antagonised Augustine (354-430), who regarded the human race as essentially sinful and who, in his writings against Pelagius, stressed the primacy of divine initiative in giving people whatever capacity they have to do good in spite of their sinful nature. The Augustinian position, of course, became normative in the Roman Catholic Church, which has always regarded Pelagius as a heretic.

20. Berrigan, *The Mission: A Film Journal*, pp. 143-146.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 145.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 141.

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 96-97, 101.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 149.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 58.

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27, 140, 144.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 46.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 82.

29. *Ibid.*, pp. 64-66, 70-71, 100.

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 36, 64, 128, 132.

31. *Ibid.*, pp. 110-111.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 160.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 136.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 56.

36. *Ibid.*, pp. 53-54.

37. *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

38. *Ibid.*, pp. 78-79.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 93.

40. *Ibid.*, pp. 74-75.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

42. *Ibid.*, pp. 105-106.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 106.
44. Various literary scholars and theologians have commented on the great difficulty of creating viable symbolic Christ figures in fiction. See, for example, Theodore Ziolkowski, *Fictional Transfigurations of Jesus* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972).
45. *Ibid.*, pp. 43, 95-97, 124-129.
46. *Ibid.*, pp. 80-81.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 115.
48. *Ibid.*, pp. 79, 82.
49. *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12, 126.
50. Marshall Deutelbaum, review of *The Mission: A Film Journal*, *Library Journal*, CXI, no. 17 (15 October 1986), p. 106.
51. David J. Snider, *The Mission: A Film Journal*, *The Christian Century*, CIV, no. 12 (1 April 1987), pp. 361-362.
52. Gib Johnson, review of *The Mission: A Film Journal*, *The New York Times*, 4 January 1987, Section 7, p. 19.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE FILM *THE MISSION*

At last we arrive at our direct consideration of *The Mission* as such. To begin at the beginning, it should be emphasised that the principal *raison d'être* of this film was to make money for the owners of Gold Crest Films by providing entertainment which would prove engaging to cinema-goers on an international scope. While this might seem self-evident, it must be stressed that pecuniary motives did not underlie every feature film produced about the church in Latin America during the fourth quarter of the twentieth century. Most pointedly, the production of *Romero*, a powerful portrayal of the assassinated archbishop Oscar Romero, was underwritten by the Roman Catholic Church in the United States of America to call attention to right-wing oppression of both the populace and the church in El Salvador and the rôle of the church in resisting that tyranny. Gold Crest cannot be accused of embodying such noble ideals. The explicitly Christian emphasis in *The Mission* arises largely from its historical subject matter, although Daniel Berrigan's advisory part also left its mark. Nevertheless, the great extent to which missiological issues characterise the content and structure of this film is striking.

A brief catalogue of the most obvious missiological issues at play in *The Mission* includes the portrayal of the Guaraní and their supposedly Edenic society, the depiction of Spanish colonialism in Paraguay and its link to the propagation of Christianity there, the characterisation of Jesuit missionaries as individuals whose personalities and interpretations of the application of their faith to contemporary issues belied their membership in the same religious order, factors motivating missionary endeavours, methods of propagating Christianity amongst hitherto unevangelised people, relations between church and state in a colonial mission field, and the legitimacy of employing violence to resist violent oppression. To be sure, viewers see these topics refracted through the prism of Chris Menges' photography, and Robert Bolt's script betrays his lack of theological sophistication, his abhorrence of warfare, his socialism, and his mild, undefined spirituality. In places the issues are blatantly depicted; in others they are quite veiled and truncated to the point that they risk being overlooked.

Overall Structure and Voicing

The Mission is two hours and five minutes long. Its opening scene is among its most visually suspenseful. A Caucasian male, who is either unconscious or dead, is strapped to a large crucifix which is then thrown into a river, apparently not far about the Iguacu Falls. The visual tension gradually mounts as this hapless individual, who we subsequently learn is a Jesuit, and his symbolic vessel approach that enormous cataract, over which they are inescapably hurled. Later, in an episode more dramatic than historical, this martyrdom is said to have prompted the Society of Jesus to establish a mission at a remote site above the Iguacu Falls.

The riveting scene of the martyrdom, however, lies outside the principal narrative framework. For the most part, Bolt's script, the first few segments of which are chronologically somewhat enmeshed, begins *in medias res* and employs at times the first-person reports of Luis Altamirano, the morally disquieted papal legate whom an otherwise unidentified pope (who, according to the chronology of the film, must be the learned Benedict XIV, whose zeal for restoring harmonious relations between the Vatican and various European governments led him to cooperate with various foes of the Society of Jesus), has dispatched to Paraguay to investigate conditions at the politically imperilled Jesuit missions in that colony. Thus the film opens with Altamirano's retrospective narration and, apart from an epilogue which appears on the screen immediately before the credits are shown, concludes with the same as this Vatican emissary virtually admits that the failure of the papacy to oppose the forces of colonialism and evince solidarity with the Jesuit missionaries (as well as his own complicity in this policy) has precipitated the termination of the very promising campaign to create a model Christian society amongst the Guaraní. At various places in the narrative Altamirano's voice is again heard, both in conversations with Jesuits in the field and in his reports to the pope.

Broadly speaking, the identifiable chronology in question is the 1750s, when tensions within the church over the fate of the Jesuit missions were reaching their zenith. Altamirano's narrative is set entirely within that decade. Too specifically, a printed text on the screen declares, "The historical events represented in this story are true, and occurred around the borderlands of Argentina, Paraguay & Brazil

in the year 1750". In fact, those events spanned a period beginning well before mid-century and continuing until 1758. Immediately after Altamirano's initial comments, however, which are in the form of a letter to the Roman pontiff in 1758, the scene shifts to an earlier, unspecified period in which the Jesuit mission leader, Father Gabriel, prompted by the martyrdom of his colleague Father Julien, single-handedly scales the Iguazu Falls, overcomes the initial hostility of the local Guaraní, and, availing himself of an opportunity caused by their fascination with his oboe playing, succeeds in establishing the previously mentioned missionary outpost, San Carlos.

The third principal European character enters the plot not long after the establishment of this temporarily secluded station. Rodrigo Mendoza, a slave hunter, appears near San Carlos seeking with some success to capture Guaraní whom he sells to colonial agriculturalists in Asunción. Father Gabriel confronts him and, to no avail, challenges his right to engage in that activity in Spanish mission territory above the Iguazu Falls. The recalcitrant Mendoza brushes aside this protest and continues with his grotesquely exploitative pursuit. Eventually he murders his younger brother after finding him in bed with a woman whose sexual favours he also desires and consequently falls into a state of total despondency. The Jesuit provincial in Asunción requests Father Gabriel to attempt to counsel Mendoza. With considerable effort, Gabriel convinces him that redemption is possible even for murderers. Following an excruciating penance which involves *inter alia* dragging a net filled with his personal armaments through the jungle to San Carlos, the erstwhile slave hunter accepts the forgiveness of both God and the Guaraní and becomes a lay brother at that station.

When the area is transferred from Spanish to Portuguese dominion according to the terms of the 1750 Treaty of Madrid, however, the indigenes can no longer count on the protection of the Spanish ban on slave hunting. Deepening their plight, the religio-political machinations preceding the suppression of the Society of Jesus include the papal closure of the Jesuit missions in the New World. Altamirano arrives on the scene ostensibly to inspect these stations prior to making a recommendation to the pope but in reality to arrange for the closing of the mission, despite a public hearing on the matter in Asunción. This poses a dilemma for both the Jesuits in question and their threatened Guaraní congregations. The irenic Father Gabriel

eschews armed resistance, while Mendoza tutors the Guaraní in the art of warfare and leads them in battle when Spanish and Portuguese troops attack San Carlos. Discussions between these two Jesuits contribute to the dramatic tensions in *The Mission*, as do Altamirano's conflicts with the Jesuit missionaries and with his own consciousness. Both Father Gabriel and Rodrigo Mendoza are shot to death during that devastation of the station, as are many of the indigenous adults and children. In the closing scene, a naked Guaraní girl surveys the skeleton of the burnt chapel, picks up a violin floating in the river, and carries it to a canoe which other children slowly paddle away. As they disappear, a text superimposed on screen informs viewers that "the Indians of South America are still engaged in a struggle to defend their land and their culture. Many of the priests who, inspired by faith and love, continue to support the rights of the Indians for justice, do so with their lives". This, in brief, is the plot of the partly linear narrative.

The Mission is thus both an historical epic which seeks to portray an important chapter in the history of the Society of Jesus and a microcosmic study of several men wrestling with profound moral issues in which human lives and the order's missionary programme in the Americas hang in the balance. As such, it is a representative member of Robert Bolt's literary *corpus*, sharing with his other filmscripts the common theme of personal dilemmas in the context of crucial historical junctures.

We can at this point briefly cite some of the most important elements which Bolt apparently elected not to squeeze into the relatively narrow confines of his script. First, the principal characters, though carefully drawn, emerge *ex nihilo*. Viewers learn virtually nothing about their backgrounds and the factors shaping their development before they appear in the plot. As we shall see in the following chapter, this absence is a primary difference separating the film from the novelisation of *The Mission*. Secondly, considering the profoundly epic quality of the film, the historical evolution of the missions in question is surprisingly sketchy. Thirdly, viewers are told very little about the machinations in the courts of Europe which precipitated the closure of Jesuit missions and ultimately the suppression of the Society of Jesus. Finally, the narrative appears truncated. To anyone without prior knowledge of the history of slavery in South America and of Jesuit missions there,

the ultimate fate of both the missionary endeavour in question and of the Guaraní remains a mystery when *The Mission* draws to a close.

To the extent that any one character is an embodiment of Bolt's personal political (though hardly his religious) convictions, it is Father Gabriel, through whom he speaks repeatedly. This priest's views opposing slavery, militarism as a means of resolving conflicts, and respect for indigenous cultures correspond most closely to those of Bolt and, from a literary viewpoint, can be regarded as the most direct voicing of authorial positions on these matters. In places the stances taken by Rodrigo Mendoza, especially with regard to armed resistance, are a foil for those of Father Gabriel. The Spanish and Portuguese colonists represent forces of unenlightened, exploitative imperialism in Bolt's moral scheme, while Altamirano is an anguished, compromised soul caught between residual Christian idealism and a pragmatic mind as he tragically seeks without success to find a way to allow Jesuit missions to continue without antagonising Iberian political interests which have threatened to expel the Society of Jesus from their realms.

The Ministry and Active Quietude of Father Gabriel

As indicated earlier, much of the plot of *The Mission* rests on the interplay of the three principal European characters, each of whom must wrestle with the dictates of his conscience. We shall therefore deal with each of these men, focussing on aspects Bolt's characterisation as well as on how each man seeks to cope with his personal dilemma. Within our discussion of these matters, we shall initially touch on missiological issues to which we shall return in greater detail in further sections of the present chapter.

Father Gabriel is the second to appear on the screen, but we shall consider him first, because much of what he does antedates Altamirano's retrospective emergence in the plot. No information is provided about his career as a missionary before the martyrdom of Father Julien, and there is no indication of his nationality. All European characters in *The Mission* speak English and have no difficulty in communicating with each other; perhaps it is implied that they all speak Spanish (or, in a few instances, Portuguese) as either a first or second language. In any

case, Father Gabriel, who is depicted as a saintly soul with few if any obvious foibles, quickly establishes the authority of his unspecified position over his colleagues and insists that he will scale the Iguazu Falls alone. This is portrayed as a matter of personal responsibility. Over the protest of another priest who insists that Father Gabriel not make the ascent by himself, Father Gabriel explains succinctly, "I sent him, Father. I have to go up there myself". In making this climb in a protracted scene which offers more visual metaphorical meaning than geographical realism, he shows remarkable fortitude and perseverance, two of the attributes which continue to manifest themselves throughout the film.

Father Gabriel embodies not only some measure of the authoritarian tenor of his era and that of the Society of Jesus but also represents the musical emphasis of the Jesuit missions and thereby foresages what soon is seen to be a focal point of cultural and liturgical life at the *reducciones*. Apparently fully cognizant of the Guaraní love of music and the important rôle it has played in attracting them to the missions, as his first evangelistic act after ascending the Iguazu Falls he sits down and calmly plays his oboe in the forest. This priest's courage is not total, however. That Father Gabriel also nervously perceives the danger to which he is subjecting himself is also manifest, but he nevertheless continues to play when curious Guaraní men encircle him. His music ends only when one of them deliberately fractures the oboe. Yet Father Gabriel refuses to relent. Perhaps driven by necessity when surrounded by men whom he presumably believes have been cut from the same ethnic bolt which produced the savages who murdered his subordinate Father Julien, he perseveres and wins their confidence, not least through his musical talent. Altamirano's narratorial voice intrudes: "With an orchestra the Jesuits could have subdued the whole continent".

The evangelisation of the Guaraní is only part of Father Gabriel's ministry; he also evinces considerable skill at conventional pastoral counselling in a masculine mode during his dealings with the despondent murderer Rodrigo Mendoza. The initial confrontation between these two men at the Jesuit institution in Asunción is an incident which Daniel Berrigan regarded as "the Great Pivotal Scene upon Which All Depends".¹ Father Gabriel challenges Mendoza to shock him out of his despondency. "Is this remorse?" he asks. "Maybe you wish I were your executioner". Placing another burr under Mendoza's emotional saddle, the sedately

provocative priest declares, "I see a man running away; I see a coward". He then shifts gears and drives ahead on an explicitly spiritual course: "God gave us the burden of freedom. You chose your crime; do you have the courage to choose your penance?" Initially the erstwhile slave hunter asserts that no penance is sufficiently demanding to be of assistance in the absolution of his sin, but he eventually relents and undergoes that which is described in some detail below. Channelling divine redemption to Mendoza as God elevates him from his personal hell to a new life is one of Father Gabriel's few triumphs *vis-à-vis* Europeans in *The Mission*. Its missiological significance is at best indirect, as it reveals something of Father Gabriel's idealism, insight into sin and human nature generally, and faith.

Father Gabriel's idealism is not total, however, and during Altamirano's hearing in Asunción he reveals a pragmatic strain when the future of Jesuit missions in Paraguay is placed in jeopardy. When, after a confrontation between Mendoza and a wealthy Spanish colonist causes an outburst against the work of the Society of Jesus, the papal legate informs Father Gabriel that Mendoza's supposed impudence is fuel to their secular enemies at a time when "the very existence of the Jesuit order" is at stake, Father Gabriel compromises his integrity and insists that Mendoza publicly eat his words - not because they are false, but because they are rhetorical ammunition in the hands of the Jesuits' foes on both sides of the Atlantic.

In the remainder of *The Mission*, Father Gabriel is a paragon of principle, simultaneously loyal to his Christian moral precepts and his Guaraní congregation. Bolt highlights this highmindedness in the confrontations between this priest and Rodrigo Mendoza when it becomes apparent that San Carlos, situated within the territory that has been transferred to Portuguese hegemony, is subject to likely military intervention because its residents refuse to leave. Risking threatened excommunication by countering Altamirano's order to leave that *reducción*, Father Gabriel chooses to remain with his flock during its hour of greatest need as the wolves of colonial militarism advance. Mendoza approaches his superior one evening and, in a scene described in greater detail below, requests dispensation from his vow of obedience, presumably so that he can lead the indigenous resistance without being responsible to any authority within his religious order. Father Gabriel refuses to grant this petition, however, and implores Mendoza to "help them as a priest!" Rather than being a deity of warfare, he insists, "God is love". Father Gabriel

explains succinctly that by dying with blood on his hands, he will have betrayed everything the Society of Jesus has stood for at tranquil San Carlos. This position, which, admittedly, is not necessarily one of fully-fledged pacifism (anomalous within the Society of Jesus prior to the twentieth century), is not otherwise presented in detail. Bolt neither explains how Father Gabriel arrived at nor explores possible limits of his commitment to it. Instead, he reiterates the basic point during a second verbal exchange between the two Jesuits in question immediately before San Carlos is invaded. Mendoza again approaches Father Gabriel and asks him for his blessing. Again he comes away empty-handed. "If you're right, you'll have God's blessing", Father Gabriel explains. "If you're wrong, my blessing won't mean anything. If might is right, then love has no place in the world. It may be so; it may be so", he reasons. "But I don't have the strength to live in a world like that, Rodrigo. I can't bless you". Rather than pronouncing a blessing, Father Gabriel silently hangs around Mendoza's neck the cross which he himself had donned immediately before initially scaling the Iguazu Falls after the martyrdom of Father Julien. The meaning of this symbolic act is left for viewers to interpret. It seems plausible that Bolt and/or Joffé sought to draw a partial parallel between Father Gabriel's courageously entering hostile Guaraní country as an irenic Christian and Mendoza's intention of defending the same area as a militant Christian after the establishment of a church there. If so, it calls attention to the fact that Christians, including Jesuits, have differed markedly on questions concerning the legitimacy or illegitimacy of violence as a means of achieving some end. That, of course, is one of the cardinal issues on which *The Mission* turns.

Eventually, Father Gabriel's unwavering commitment to his principles and to his congregation at San Carlos costs him his temporal life. He begins to celebrate Mass in the chapel which the invading soldiers and their indigenous mercenaries ignite with flaming arrows. As the members of the congregation leave the burning structure, Father Gabriel remains with them, bearing the monstrance outdoors, where he displays it as a symbol of the presence of Jesus Christ to the kneeling worshippers. He then continues to go forth, leading a procession while carrying the ciborium until he is shot down. Considered in terms of the kinds of missionary endeavour, these intensely dramatic moments of *The Mission* lie graphically at the confluence

of the sacramental and liberationist modes, the place of which we shall examine shortly.

The Spiritual Odyssey and Death of Rodrigo Mendoza

The slave hunter turned Jesuit novice Rodrigo Mendoza is a pivotal figure in *The Mission*, one whose development as a character is inconsistent but nevertheless sufficient to illuminate certain missiological and political issues. In the film - though certainly not in Bolt's novelisation - his background is almost entirely nebulous. Mendoza simply emerges from the bush in the scene in which some of Father Gabriel's recent converts to Christianity above the Iguazu Falls are dramatically caught in a net. The missionary addresses him as "Captain Mendoza", although what that title signifies is not made clear, and protests that he and his colleagues are transforming the Guaraní above the falls into Christians. Mendoza's cryptic reply, "If you have the time", expresses his callousness to their missionary endeavour and the intensity of the challenge which he and his fellow slavers pose. Later, after he takes up residence at the San Carlos outpost, Mendoza discloses that he had been trained as a mercenary, but no additional facts about his military career are revealed.

One hinge on which the plot turns is Mendoza's transition from this militant background through a period of despair after he commits fratricide into a life of redeemed service to the Society of Jesus in its nascent mission above the Iguazu Falls until the encroachment of Spanish and Portuguese troops prompts him to take up arms again. This subplot adds a profound element of depth and intimacy to the epic quality of *The Mission* and must be treated in some detail.

Mendoza's entanglements with Spanish colonists in Paraguay form part of his rôle. On the one hand, he triumphantly rides through the dusty streets of Asunción while Guaraní slaves he has captured stagger along behind him, roped together like livestock. As this hunter of men returns from the forest, he acknowledges a young woman, whom we subsequently learn to be his paramour Carlotta. The enmeshed character of their relationship immediately becomes apparent, as she is shown together with Mendoza's more refined younger brother, Felipé. Carlotta

is apparently Spanish, notwithstanding her mispronunciation of the Spanish surname "Mendoza". Rodrigo is shown to be not merely a man of violence, but also of passion. It gradually becomes evident to him that Carlotta is romantically involved with his brother; she eventually confesses as much. During an unidentified religious festival in Asunción, he bursts into a room in an inn and discovers the two in bed together one night. In a rage, he storms out. Felipé immediately follows him, seeking to explain. In a chronologically bungled scene which takes place in the street below, the two engage in a duel which ends abruptly with Rodrigo stabbing his overmatched sibling to death in bright sunshine.

The elder Mendoza's spiritual descent into a living hell is not traced, but in any case his next appearance is the previously mentioned confrontation with Father Gabriel in Asunción. As a fratricidal dueler who has taken refuge in a Jesuit establishment there, he exists in a state of total despair. "There is no life", he insists. "For me there is no redemption". When Father Gabriel suggests that appropriate penance can provide part of his salvation, Mendoza asserts that "there is no penance hard enough for me".

Subsequent events disprove his conviction. In a visually powerful and metaphoric scene, Mendoza drags a net containing weaponry through the jungle and up a cliff near the Iguazu Falls. At times his arduous ascent seems to be a labour of Sisyphus, but he doggedly continues his struggle, even after a sympathetic Irish Jesuit named John hacks through the rope which links Mendoza to the burden of his past sin, sending the net hurtling down a cliff, only to be carried up again. At an equally symbolic point, Mendoza himself nearly plummets into the abyss, only to be pulled up by Father Gabriel.

In terms of conventional, individual spirituality, *The Mission* attains what Daniel Berrigan calls its second summit when Mendoza reaches the heights near the Iguazu Falls and San Carlos, and a group of Guaraní men who initially intend to dispatch their former tormenter, possibly having learnt something about the absolution of sin, forgive him instead. Rather than slitting Mendoza's throat, their chief uses his knife to sever the penitential rope. For his part, Mendoza finally comprehends that salvation is his, that he has returned from the pit of his personal inferno. He consequently bursts into tears and is embraced by both the Guaraní and the Jesuits who have accompanied him.

Mendoza's new life is played out chiefly at San Carlos, where initially as a guest he participates in developing that station. In a reversal of his previous relationship with the Guaraní, he becomes a servant of man and God alike. His white man's burden at San Carlos is depicted as carrying loads of mud for the construction of the chapel and assisting with carpentry. Mendoza also acquires the rudiments of the Guaraní tongue. He seems particularly close to the children, with whom he frolics in the river. In response to his humility, the indigenes accept Mendoza fully in their midst. Symbolically closing the remaining gap between him and themselves, a group of young Guaraní escort the erstwhile slave hunter into a hut and meticulously paint tribal signs on his body. Mendoza is the only European in *The Mission* who ever bears such symbols. The Jesuits at San Carlos and San Miguel clearly have the respect of the Guaraní, but the latter's unquestionable acceptance of Mendoza rises to another level.

Another scene depicting Mendoza's life at San Carlos must be considered, because it relates poignantly to his spiritual *metanoia*. Not long after young Guaraní mark his body, they invite him to examine a small wild boar which they have captured and, handing him a spear, offer him the honour of dispatching it. Presumably unable to expunge from his mind the horrific memory of stabbing his brother to death, however, Mendoza immediately declines and walks away. He appears to have turned his back completely on his violent past.

Mendoza's acceptance into the Society of Jesus is also described in considerable detail. It is preceded by contemplation and oral reading of the Bible, specifically the Pauline prose-poem about *ἀγάπη* in I Corinthians 13. During their conversation about his desire to become a Jesuit, Father Gabriel informs him that the former mercenary will have to obey his orders as though they were those of a "commander-in-chief". Mendoza gives his assent without hesitation. This subordination to religious authority sets up subsequent, crucial tensions between these two Jesuits which remain unresolved and give *The Mission* much of its dramatic thrust. It also casts additional light on the internal power structure in the fields where the Society of Jesus was then active which had ramifications of an arguably debilitating nature for the indigenous church among the Guaraní, a subject to which we shall return.

Beneath the surface of obedience and servitude, however, Mendoza retains a remnant of his militancy which emerges in confrontations with colonial authorities

in Asunción. When the wealthy landowner Don Cabeza testifies at Altamirano's public hearing there that "there is no slavery" in Spanish colonial territory, where labour relations are conducted "in strict accordance with the laws of Spain and the precepts of the church", the enraged Mendoza leaps to his feet and twice calls that colonist a "liar". Deeply insulted by what he claims to regard as an impugning of his integrity, Don Cabeza calls Mendoza both a "monk" and, quite inaccurately, and perhaps as a sign of his unreliability, a "priest". Altamirano recesses the hearing to consider the matter. During this respite, Father Gabriel, apparently feeling that the future of the mission has been threatened by this challenge to the powerful Don Cabeza, insists that he apologise. Initially Mendoza refuses, insisting that he had told the truth about the enslavement of the Guaraní, a topic about which he was eminently informed. Only after his superior threatens him with expulsion from the Society of Jesus does Mendoza agree, and then quite without enthusiasm, to recant. Kneeling before Altamirano later that day, he stammers through a confession which betrays far more reluctance than ingenuousness, declaring that "by order of holy obedience" and "humbly and without reservation" he wished to apologise to Don Cabeza for "my presumption and my insolence". Gaining momentum, Mendoza asks the pardon of Altamirano, his fellow Jesuits, and - quite presciently - to the Guaraní youth who has sung at the assembly, for insulting Don Cabeza. His bitter action is a crystal-clear case of behaviour dictated by expediency, the pragmatic necessity of which is underscored by the willingness of even the high-minded Father Gabriel to avoid insulting further the wealthy Spanish colonists when the future of the mission seems to hang in the balance.

In apologising publicly, however, the well-informed former slave hunter has not said his last about the colonial exploitation of the Guaraní. When Altamirano subsequently visits San Miguel in order to gain a first-hand impression of how the missions function, Mendoza insists on graphically proving his point by showing him the deeply scarred back of a Guaraní who has been a slave in Spanish territory.

The backsliding of Mendoza into ways which echo his pre-Jesuit life as a slave hunter and mercenary is artfully conveyed through both dialogue and visual imagery. When it becomes apparent that the Portuguese will occupy the Mission Territory and the Guaraní at San Carlos vow to resist that move, Mendoza remains at that station. A boy retrieves his sword from the river into which it had been

dropped when Mendoza completed his penance and offers it to him. After pondering that weapon, the Jesuit novice decides to accept it from the youth and practices his thrusts with it.

Precisely how Mendoza reaches his decision to lead the armed resistance is not treated in detail in the film. By contrast, as we shall see in the following chapter, Bolt describes this process in his novelisation. On the screen, Mendoza reverts to militarism without going through any expressed reflection about the matter. One is left, perhaps, (especially in the wake of his confrontation with Don Cabeza in Asunción) with the impression that he is essentially a man of impulse rather than of careful cogitation. He quite abruptly appears before Father Gabriel one evening and announces his desire to renounce his vow of obedience. The latter refuses to accept this renunciation and, curiously enough, refers to Mendoza as a priest, even though there is no indication that he has been ordained to that ministry. When during a second confrontation between the two men shortly before the invasion of San Carlos, Father Gabriel denies Mendoza's request for a blessing and makes his previously cited declarations that God is love and that love is incompatible with might, Mendoza remains silent.

Beneath the surface, Mendoza's resumption of the militant life does not transform him into a totally insensitive fighting machine. Immediately after stabbing a soldier while raiding military hardware from an invading party, he facially shows remorse. Emphasising his fundamental love of the Guaraní, during the protracted depiction of the invasion Mendoza is shown being shot in the back while trying to help a wounded child. He dies while watching Father Gabriel bear the ciborium out of the burning chapel and falling when struck by a bullet. The interpretation of Mendoza's individual salvation, and his rôle in that of the Guaraní from the viewpoint of the theology which motivated Jesuit missions in the eighteenth century, is artfully left to the viewer.

The Tragic Dilemma of Luis Altamirano

Owing largely to the prominence of his narratorial voice, Altamirano remains a less enigmatic but nevertheless decidedly more complex character whose place in missions history gives *The Mission* even more dramatic tensions than either Father Gabriel or Rodrigo Mendoza. A few hints about his background are given explicitly or implicitly during the course of his narration and his direct dialogue. That he is a high-ranking prelate is evident from the fact that the Holy Father has commissioned him to investigate the state of the Jesuit missions in South America during a critical juncture in their history. Altamirano is elderly, suggesting considerable experience in ecclesiastical affairs, and he seems quite at ease when leading a public hearing, conversing with colonial and religious officials, and otherwise executing his duties. Altamirano is also articulate, and at several points of the narrative Bolt places almost poetic language into his mouth. During a conversation with wealthy Spanish colonists in Asunción who do not veil their hostility towards the Society of Jesus, Altamirano discloses that he had previously been a Jesuit. While subsequently speaking with Father Gabriel, he reveals that he knows much about the machinations of royal courts in Europe. A man of the church, Altamirano is thus also a well-versed man of the world. Much of the dramatic quality *The Mission* reflects the dilemma which he faces by simultaneously living in both, although his predicament is also precipitated and complicated by his dual loyalties to the papacy and the missionary impulse of the Society of Jesus.

Bolt underscores both the vulnerable position of the Jesuit missions in the 1750s and the quandary in which Altamirano found himself during that decade by placing one paradox after another into the mouth of this emissary. Setting the tone, when he commences to dictate his report to the pope at the beginning of his narrative, Altamirano starts by assuring the Holy Father that since the closure of the *reducciones* the indigenes were once again "free to be enslaved by the Spanish and Portuguese settlers" but immediately directs his scribe to delete those words as inappropriate. Nevertheless, Altamirano emphasises early in his account that "little in this world unfolds as we predict", thereby calling attention to the apparent irrationality of what has transpired.

His summary comment about contacts between the indigenes and both European missionaries and slave hunters above the Iguacu Falls mirrors the mixed blessing which that implied for the native population in that area. Almost immediately after relating how Father Gabriel and his colleagues finally penetrated that region with the Gospel, he declares: "So it was that the Indians of the Guaraní were brought finally to account to the everlasting mercy of God and to the short-lived mercy of man". At this point, however, Altamirano does not explain how the missionary endeavour under consideration contributed to the latter development. Indeed, owing in large measure to Father Gabriel's explanations as well as his own observations, he subsequently reaches an understanding of the protection which the Jesuits afford the Guaraní when the latter are subjected to culturally and physically lethal economic exploitation.

Yet this appreciation brings Altamirano to a deeper understanding of other paradoxes in which he becomes entangled. In a world of egotism and ethnocentrism, he comes to believe, the success of the *reducciones* proves to be their undoing. In writing this key segment of Altamirano's narrative, Bolt reinforces the tradition, stemming in part from Cunninghame Graham, that the Jesuits had created nearly Utopian missionary communities in the wilderness. "This seeking to create a paradise on earth, how easily it offends", observes the papal emissary. "Your Holiness is offended because it may distract from that paradise which is to come hereafter", he declares. Altamirano's assertion about the pope's reaction is unsubstantiated by any historical evidence, yet it is part of a valuable rhetorical device in which he seeks to cope with his own involvement in the closure of the safe havens for the Guaraní by underscoring that it was virtually inevitable in light of the conflicting interests of people and nations far more powerful than himself: "Their majesties of Spain and Portugal are offended because the paradise of the poor is seldom pleasing to those who rule over them. And the settlers here are offended for the same reason". In retrospect, at least, Altamirano understands that any goal he had set of pleasing all the parties in question was ultimately unrealistic: "So it was this burden I carried to South America, to satisfy the Portuguese wish to enlarge their empire, to satisfy the Spanish desire that this would do them no harm. To satisfy Your Holiness that these monarchs of Spain and Portugal would threaten no more

the power of the church, and to ensure for you all that the Jesuits here could no longer deny you these satisfactions”.

The veracity of these insights begins to become apparent during the hearing which Altamirano conducts *al fresco* in Asunción. There he is faced with the sincerity of the Jesuits and palpable success of their missions among the Guaraní on the one hand and the vested interests of powerful colonists on the other. The incompatibility of these human forces becomes increasingly clear to Altamirano as their testimonies proceed and reach their zenith when Rodrigo Mendoza impugns the integrity of Don Cabeza. In the wake of this outburst, the papal emissary informs Father Gabriel that “the very existence of the Jesuit order” is the issue with which he must deal.

Having reached an impasse in the Paraguayan colonial capital, apparently, Altamirano seeks to solve his dilemma by inspecting some of the missions, beginning with what he incorrectly identifies as the oldest of them, San Miguel. Yet immediately Bolt telegraphs the prelate’s final decision while underscoring the ironic tragedy of his assignment. Continuing his narration, Altamirano writes to the pope that he was impressed by the “beauty and power of the limb that I have come here to sever”. He discovers that the sublime singing of an *Ave Maria* by a Guaraní youth at the hearing in Asunción was but a foretaste of the liturgical feast awaiting him. Dressed as a nobleman during his visit at San Miguel, like Don Cabeza and the Portuguese colonial official Senhor Hontar, who accompany him on his tour, Altamirano is deeply impressed by the massive sanctuary, liturgical finesse, violin music, and other elements of European culture which have been transplanted amongst the Guaraní. All of this militates against the colonists’ belief and repeated assertions that the indigenes are little more than savages over whom the Jesuit missionaries have spread the thinnest veneer of Christian civilisation.

Complementing the religious dimension of life at the *reducciones* to which Altamirano is exposed is the economic progress which the Guaraní have made under the tutelage of the Society of Jesus. The emphasis this receives in *The Mission* is among the most vivid examples of the tendentious influence of Bolt’s socialist convictions and contemporary liberation theology on the production of the film. Altamirano discusses the prosperity of the agricultural enterprise at San Miguel with some of its indigenous inhabitants, one of whom, a priest, underscores the communal ownership of property there. When the papal emissary quips that “a

French radical group” advocates a similar form of tenure, the cleric deftly counters with an allusion to the Acts of the Apostles that communal ownership was the “doctrine of the early Christians”. This point is not further developed in *The Mission*, however.

Virtually in desperation, Altamirano seeks to arrange a compromise as a way out of his dilemma. Before leaving San Miguel, he discusses with Hontar his desire to maintain the vitality of the missions while simultaneously satisfying Portuguese territorial aspirations. “I suggest that you and I together advise your king to postpone the transfer of the mission territories until we get guarantees from the Portuguese for their survival”, he proposes. The unreconstructed Don Cabeza intrudes with his capitalist, colonial voice, however, expressing well-known historic allegations against the Society of Jesus in South America. “The work of the mission is the work of the devil”, he asserts. “They teach contempt for property and legal profit, and they are disobedient to the king’s authority”. Despite the intractable character of this opposition, Altamirano insists that he shall make his decision on the basis of his conscience.

That he is a deeply troubled soul is illustrated most vividly by the fact that he spends no fewer than five hours in solitude in the chapel at San Miguel pondering his decision. Apparently sensing an opening, Father Gabriel convinces him to accompany him farther upriver to the more isolated *reducción* at San Carlos above the Iguazu Falls, where God supposedly can speak more clearly to him. Altamirano relents and travels with a small entourage, this time unburdened by the presence of Don Cabeza and Hontar. The beaming prelate approaches the remote station beaming at the sight of that “Garden of Eden” where the Guaraní welcome this dignitary with cheers, applause, dancing, and the music of indigenous instruments. Altamirano observes daily life there while happy children wrestle, swim in the river, and are taught. All this is presented in an explicitly Christian context, as an *Ave Maria* is sung in the background. Bolt’s words in Altamirano’s mouth summarising his response to these scenes reflect both an anti-imperialist attitude and the ever-deepening quandary which opposition to the Society of Jesus on both sides of the Atlantic posed during the Enlightenment. “Though I knew that everywhere in Europe states were tearing at the authority of the church, and though I knew well that to preserve itself there the church must show its authority over the Jesuits here, I still

couldn't help wondering whether these Indians would not have preferred that the sea and wind had not brought any of us to them", he writes to the Holy Father.

Nevertheless, when faced with the awareness of the obdurate opposition of Don Cabeza and Hontar to a negotiated settlement, Altamirano reveals the limits of his loyalties to the order to which he had belonged and the extent to which geopolitical considerations overshadow it by announcing that he shall recommend to the pope the evacuation of the Jesuit mission stations. Yet he insists that he is acting in the long-term interests of the Society of Jesus. He summarily orders all the Jesuits at San Carlos to return with him to Asunción or face excommunication.

Altamirano's entrapment in a world of paradoxes continues to the end of the film. After the devastation of the *reducciones*, he discusses in disgust this "slaughter" with Hontar and Don Cabeza, the latter of whom defends the military action and calls attention to the fact that Altamirano sanctioned the purpose which it served, namely the evacuation of those mission stations. The less brusque Hontar seeks to exonerate the deeply troubled Altamirano. "You had no alternative, Your Eminence. We must work in the world. The world is thus". To the papal emissary, however, such rhetoric is an abandonment of the moral responsibility which he must acknowledge is his. "No, Señor Hontar, thus have we made the world", he replies; "thus have I made it". Altamirano's final words in *The Mission*, the conclusion of his report to the pope, are no less paradoxical and form an unmistakable bridge to the liberationist text which appears on the screen at the conclusion of the plot: "So, Your Holiness, now your priests are dead, and I am left alive, but in truth it I who am dead, and they who live, for as always, Your Holiness, the spirit of the dead will survive in the memory of the living". Bolt's tragic Altamirano, in other words, has apparently realised that his high wire act of balancing far above a chasm of political conflict by seeking to effect compromises has been inadequate to save himself or the mission about which he eventually came to care. Those who will endure when he will not are the men of God who have taken a definite, uncompromising stance.

Savages in Eden? The Image of the Guaraní

The overarching image of the Guaraní in *The Mission* is relatively complex, not least because it evolves during the course of the film. Their collective portrayal can be attributed primarily to the interplay of Bolt's script, Menges' photography, and Joffé's directing, although Morricone's score contributes to it in places. The initial image is established in the second scene of the film, in which the possibly dead body of Father Julien, attached to a massive wooden cross, is placed into the Paraná River. Several attributes of the Guaraní are effectively underscored during their first brief appearance on the screen. At the most elemental level, their proximity to their natural habitat is obvious. These people merge visually with the earth tones of their environment and seem quite at ease in their setting, along the paths of which the children scamper with abandon. Indeed, the meshing of people with habitat seems virtually seamless.

Other characteristics underscore differences which separate the Guaraní of the forest from both the Jesuits and other Europeans with whom they come into contact. The indigenous people almost uniformly have short, thick torsos. Some have coloured sectors of their black hair orange to produce a two-tone effect little known in European circles. Less exotically depicted Guaraní men and all the children, though, have retained monochrome black hair. The men carry bows and arrows which in this context serve as signs of their defensiveness and initial hostility to intruders. Clothing is generally very scanty, usually not extending beyond loincloths, and many of the children are naked. Many of the men have painted bodies, and some wear necklaces comprising animal fangs. As another visual sign of their exotic character, what appears to be a dead iguana hangs suspended at the site where the drenched Father Gabriel sits down to play his oboe above the Iguazu Falls. Even the olfactory sense is brought into play to underscore the ethnic difference. One curious young Guaraní sniffs Father Gabriel while he and his companions surround this interloper.

Almost as soon as the party of Guaraní men who encircle the music-making priest threaten his life and their leader breaks the oboe, however, another attempts to piece it together again and offers it back to its owner. He motions that it is

irreparable, but they accept his presence and escort him to their village. The tribe's acceptance of Christianity is shown simultaneously with an abundance of mirth as the nearly insouciant and evidently curious indigenes examine the framed pictures of the infant Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary which Father Gabriel, now speaking their language, manually displays. Clearly, the intended essential portrayal of the Guaraní above the Iguacu Falls is one of natural harmony and happiness when unsullied by slave hunters or other challenges which European colonialism has already brought to less secluded areas.

The *Reducciones* and the Guaraní Church

The generally favourable image of the Guaraní in their primitive state before contact with European colonists continues through the film, although much of the subsequent depiction of them focuses on their adaptability to aspects of European culture, especially music, and the harmonious life they lead as residents of *reducciones*. Indeed, a key element in the plot of *The Mission* is the positive portrayal of these communities as *loci* where the Guaraní retain their native insouciance while accepting Christianity and absorbing certain innocuous aspects of European culture while being sheltered from the ravages of the slave trade.

The first depiction of the cultural adaptability of the Guaraní is a retrospective scene at the beginning of the film while Altamirano dictates his report to the pope. Father Gabriel is shown playing a violin in a modern building while instructing six young male and female Guaraní in the art of bowing that instrument. Only one of these pupils is using sheet music. Altamirano's words are closely co-ordinated with this visual image of South American indigenes under the tutelage of a European missionary: "The noble souls of these Indians incline towards music. Indeed, many a violin played in the academies of Rome itself has been made by their nimble and gifted hands".

Music remains a *Leitmotiv* in the positive portrayal of the Christianised Guaraní. In one pivotal scene which occurs approximately midway through the film, an adolescent boy from the San Carlos mission is brought to Asunción to sing at a hearing at which Altamirano presides. In the presence of that prelate, various

Jesuits, and many Spanish and Portuguese colonists, the scantily clad youth intones an *Ave Maria* with perfect melodic control. In the plot, his singing of that segment of the Latin Mass is clearly intended to influence Altamirano's initial perception of the Guaraní as fully human beings who are quite capable of bridging at least part of the gap separating them from European culture and not merely quasi-anthropoid inhabitants of the jungle. Indeed, at the same hearing Father Gabriel contradicts prevailing colonial opinion by insisting that far from being animals, the Guaraní are "naturally spiritual".

It is within the *reducciones*, of course, that the development of this talent is argued to have taken place. Two such communities, namely San Carlos and San Miguel, are depicted in *The Mission*, both of them in laudatory terms.

Modes of Mission

Presumably neither Bolt nor Joffé claimed any expertise on the various ways in which Christian foreign missions, including those of the Society of Jesus and other religious communities in South America, have been conducted, and in *The Mission* they did not explicitly argue for one mode against another. This fundamental missiological issue is simply not developed in the sense that, for example, the pivotal question of individual missionaries' consciences *vis-à-vis* imperial territorial aspirations, is probed. Nevertheless, perhaps owing to the influence of erstwhile Jesuit missionary Daniel Berrigan as an advisor on spiritual matters, *The Mission* implicitly says much about its creators' perceptions of the way in which the Society of Jesus went about propagating Christianity amongst the Guaraní and creating Christian communities in their midst.

We have already alluded briefly to one factor which historians and other commentators have repeatedly mentioned as having been of considerable significance in both reaching the Guaraní and maintaining the spiritual vigour and economic viability of the *reducciones*, namely music, especially that of a liturgical nature. Father Gabriel conspicuously bears little more than his simple oboe when he scales the Iguazu Falls after the martyrdom of Father Julien, and, in a continuation of this concentrated metaphor, uses it to attract and win the trust of the Guaraní with

whom he initially comes into contact above that cataract. Furthermore, liturgical music is featured when a Guaraní youth sings at Altamirano's hearing in Asunción and upon his arrival at San Carlos. Other residents are either depicted or orally described as people who competently make and play violins. All of this underscores the aptitude and talent of the Guaraní. It should be noted, however, that within the plot most of the emphasis is placed on the transplanting of European, especially Baroque, music to tribal areas of Paraguay. The Jesuits in question make no apparent effort to employ or adapt music from Guaraní culture for religious purposes. That dimension of the contextualisation of the Gospel appears to be quite foreign to their missionary endeavour. On the other hand, Ennio Morricone made great and memorable use of culturally sensitive instruments and themes when composing the music for *The Mission*, thereby giving the film auditory effects which are not present in its plot.

The explicit evangelisation of the Guaraní is treated in cursory fashion. That there is a kerygmatic dimension is apparently assumed, although the only explicit evidence of this is in the form of framed pictures of the Virgin Mary and the infant Jesus which Father Gabriel and his colleagues show to the inhabitants of the area where they develop San Carlos. Apart from instruction in music, no schools are depicted in *The Mission*. The educational dimension, in short, is given scant direct coverage.

What is developed as an overarching theme, one which fits hand-in-glove the sacramental mode of mission,² is the motif of creating a liberated Christian zone in territory which has been hostile to the Gospel. The *reducciones* collectively comprise this spiritual tract. It cannot be overemphasised, however, that in *The Mission* the zone of liberation is not primarily in tension with the spiritual forces of indigenous Guaraní religious beliefs and practices, but rather with the encroachments of nominally Christian Spanish and Portuguese imperialists who seek to enslave the Guaraní, both those who reside at the *reducciones* and those who live outside them.

In the sacramental mode of mission, the liberated Christian zone, which is not coterminous with a specific geographic area, is generally entered by baptism. The resulting membership in a Christian community is emphasised more than a change of mind on the part of the individual convert. In *The Mission*, the baptism

of converts to Christianity and their progeny is implied but not depicted. Slightly more emphasis is placed on the eucharist, chiefly when the Mass is celebrated while the chapel at San Carlos is set ablaze. In the multiple meanings of this sacrament, the presence and ultimate victory of Jesus Christ are celebrated. This is particularly poignant in the film, which ends with the seeming triumph of imperialism over missionary Christianity. On the other hand, if in this mode of missionary endeavour the visible church serves *inter alia* as a microcosmic representation of the Kingdom of God, then the victory of the latter is left unexplained as the congregation scatters and the chapel is in ruins. Altamirano's words to the pope that "the spirit of the dead will survive in the memory of the living" only weakly counters the prevailing image of defeat.

Another hallmark of missions in the sacramental mode - though this is often exaggerated - is its adaptability to indigenisation and contextualisation. In *The Mission*, as indicated, the Gospel is presented to the target ethnic group in European ways, although the Guaraní in question appear quite receptive to European music and Christian art. At the same time, there is evidently considerable toleration of Guaraní folkways at San Carlos, another frequent though hardly universal feature of the sacramental mode of missions. This general characteristic also fits the hallmarks of the sacramental mode of mission. Two examples of this will illustrate the point. In contrast to the widespread stereotype of European missionaries insisting that females in their congregations cover their breasts and otherwise be relatively fully clothed, many of the women and girls at San Carlos appear bare-breasted, though not, it should be emphasised, during the celebration of the Mass. Secondly, while body painting has often been treated in both religious and secular European descriptions of tribal colonial peoples as a consummate sign of heathenism or savagery, that art is practised at San Carlos. Indeed, as mentioned above, young, bare-breasted females there take Rodrigo Mendoza into a hut and decorate his face and torso with designs in black paint. Father Gabriel observes this uncritically. He and his colleagues in the Society of Jesus retain their clerical garb but accept the novice Mendoza's departure from that practice, probably because his increasing closeness to the Guaraní is a reminder of their forgiveness of this former slave hunter.

In another dimension of his qualified respect for indigenous culture, Father Gabriel defends certain Guaraní practices to which colonial foes of Jesuit missions

call attention in their attempts to convince Altamirano that the Guaraní are sub-human. During Altamirano's hearing in Asunción, Father Gabriel insists that the indigenes are "naturally spiritual". In response to the challenge of a Spanish colonial participant who blurts out that "they kill their own young!" he concedes that infanticide occurs amongst the Guaraní but explains the practice in terms which place the colonists on the defensive. "Every man and woman is allowed one child. If a third is born, it is immediately killed", Father Gabriel acknowledges. "But this is not some animal rite. It is a necessity for survival. They can only run with one child apiece. And what do they run from? They run from us. They run from slavery".

The Liberationist Epilogue

Viewers who may have overlooked such liberationist elements in *The Mission* as the confrontations between the Jesuit missionaries and the colonists who uphold slavery, the defence of communal ownership of property at the *reducciones*, and Altamirano's comments about the enslavement of the Indians by Spanish and Portuguese settlers are given a final opportunity at the end of the film to realise how deeply indebted this production is to contemporary liberation theology. As Guaraní children paddle a canoe away from the devastation at San Carlos, a text is shown on the screen:

The Indians of South America are still engaged in a struggle to defend their land and their culture. Many of the priests who, inspired by faith and love, continue to support the rights of the Indians for justice, do so with their lives.

This is, of course, an explicit bridging between the resistance of the Guaraní to further enslavement during the eighteenth century and the efforts during the latter half of the twentieth century to empower the dispossessed masses of Latin America to cast off the shackles which bind them to a long history of economic and social exploitation. The adverb "still" serves as a chronological link between the historic

events depicted and the present situation to which reference is made. The noun "priests" comes hard on the heels of Altamirano's voiced statement, alluding to the carnage at San Carlos and elsewhere at the conclusion of his report to the pope that "now your priests are dead". The definite article "the" modifying the imprecise ethnic identifier "Indians" evidently seeks to establish an identity between the Guaraní of the eighteenth century with economically and culturally oppressed tribal peoples in South America at the time when *The Mission* was produced. Nothing in the several dozen newspaper and magazine articles about and reviews of the film read as part of the research for the present study sheds any light on who suggested and wrote this brief text.

As it stands, this epilogue is arguably of narrowly circumscribed value if its purpose is to enlighten cinema-goers to the involvement of the Roman Catholic Church in recent economic liberation movements in South America. To be sure, it could hardly have been expected to do much more than perform a service by provoking thought and stimulating interest in the contemporary ramifications of the larger subject. The overextended language of the epilogue is misleading, however, in that it gives an impression of much greater popular involvement in liberationist struggles than many frustrated leaders, including some of the liberation theologians cited in Chapter Seven of the present study, believe is the case. The epilogue might also suggest a considerably higher degree of indigenous cultural survival in South America than has been the case. In fact, in many countries on that continent, though to a lesser extent than among the native peoples of North America, the indigenes lost their tribal languages and most of their traditional folkways generations before *The Mission* was filmed. Finally, it should be underscored that Latin American liberation theology is not merely a matter of Roman Catholic priests defending indigenous land tenure and culture, but rather entails clergy and lay people of several denominations seeking to relate the Gospel to the many facets of the daily lives of oppressed peoples, chiefly according to economic status, not primarily along ethnic lines, although it should immediately be added that the indigenous gene pool is strongly represented in *mestizo* peoples in one South American country after another.

A second, possibly even more thought-provoking epilogue immediately follows the first in some copies of *The Mission*. Reportedly owing to pressure from unidenti-

fied “evangelists in the United States”, most of those released in the United States of America carry the words: “‘The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.’ JOHN, Chapter 1, Verse 5.” According to a statement released by Warner Brothers, the firm which handled the distribution of *The Mission* in the United States, Joffé “had himself decided to insert the caption and had not bowed to the religious lobby”.³ What viewers read into this Johannine text in its context no doubt depends in part on their degree of theological sophistication and attitudes towards the liberationist epilogue which immediately precedes it. It is entirely conceivable that many viewers have interpreted it apolitically, *i.e.* as essentially a religious message of assurance that even though the missions to the Guaraní were forced to close, thereby creating a spiritual darkness, the spark of Christianity would somehow endure and eventually rekindle a fire of faith in the region. On the other hand, if one reads John 1:5 in tandem with the projected message about the alliance of some South American indigenes and Roman Catholic priests, one could just as readily interpret the endeavours of these two allies as they pursue the interests of social justice and cultural preservation as a manifestation of God’s light.

The Music of Ennio Morricone

As we shall see in Chapter Thirteen, the reception of *The Mission* varied immensely in the arena of international criticism, notwithstanding the film’s receipt of the coveted Palme d’Or at the Cannes International Film Festival in 1986. One dimension of *The Mission* which garnered almost universal acclaim, however, was the musical score which Ennio Morricone created for it. In addition to being recorded as an internationally distributed separate product, segments of the memorable music for this film have been used in advertisements for Colombian coffee and other products. In the present section, we shall examine briefly Morricone’s creation of this culturally sensitive score and how certain parts of it are woven together with the video to emphasise themes in the film.

This eminent composer’s background provided uneven preparation for his participation in the creation of *The Mission*. Both a Roman and a Catholic, Morricone was born in the Trastevere section of the Italian capital, not far from the Vatican,

in 1928. After studying trumpet under Reginaldo Cafferelli and Umberto Semproni, he played that instrument professionally in an orchestra which recorded filmtracks in Italy. Subsequently, Morricone expanded his musical talents at the renowned Conservatory of Santa Cecilia, where he studied composition under Goffredo Petrassi and graduated with diplomas in direction, composition, trumpet, and choral music. As the entertainment industry thrived in prosperous post-war Italy, Morricone began to compose for the theatre in the early 1950s. He also created music for television during that decade and entered the hectic world of popular music as a composer and arranger. In the early 1960s Morricone first accepted a contract to participate in the creation of a film, *Il Federale*, which Luciano Salce directed. It was in the arena of Italian Westerns, popularly called "Spaghetti Westerns", however, that Morricone became internationally famous and established the backbone of his reputation. Such films as "For a Fistful of Dollars" and "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly", directed by Sergio Leone and starring Clint Eastwood, featured his distinctively - and endlessly imitated - haunting music. Morricone's scores for these and other films during the 1960s incorporated guitars, choral sections, showy trumpet solos with multiple tonguing, and even whistling.⁴

At least in its thematic dimension, *The Mission* presented Morricone with a challenge immeasurably different from those he confronted in scoring Leone's films, although with considerable modesty he subsequently insisted that several factors in the work facilitated his task. The most obvious of these was the interplay of the indigenous Guaraní culture and that which Iberian settlers and European Jesuit missionaries brought to these primal people. Morricone conducted extensive research to immerse himself in Baroque and other eighteenth-century European music, tribal musical traditions in parts of South America, and the liturgical dimensions with which he would have to deal. He thought his arduous task ultimately bore fruit. "My most important achievement with that score was being able to fuse the oboe theme, the post-Renaissance choral theme, and the ethnic music into a single musical discourse", he recalled nearly a decade later. "Technically and spiritually, the music takes into account what happens in the film".⁵

Anything approaching a comprehensive treatment of Morricone's music for *The Mission* necessarily lies outside the scope of the present study. For our purposes, we shall therefore limit our discussion almost exclusively to how he

amalgamated European and Latin American tribal themes to enhance the ideas expressed both visually and through the dialogue in this film. In doing so, we shall touch on both music which is explicitly within the film and that which accompanies it externally. Morricone took exception in 1995 with the conviction of some connoisseurs who aver that “the best film music is that you don’t hear”, stating that such a generalisation was overdrawn but offered one of his own in stating that “the kind of music that tiptoes in is invariably what serves a film best”.⁶ In *The Mission*, one finds much of the subtle sort but also a small amount of self-conscious music at key junctures, occasionally in tandem with nonmusical sounds which emphasise the confluence of cultures which lies at the heart of the film.

This begins in the opening scene. As Altamirano dictates his report to the pope, Father Gabriel is shown instructing Guaraní children in the art of the violin. The music to which he introduces them is Baroque. Almost immediately, however, the scene shifts to the hurling of Father Julien, lashed to a heavy wooden cross, into a river above the Iguacu Falls. Now the background music throbs from a pan flute while a dissonant, natural cacophony of animal sounds from the rain forest accentuates the exotic character of the indigenous, primal culture which this hapless cleric has unsuccessfully tried to penetrate.

As Altamirano continues his narrative from a singularly Eurocentric point of view, Father Gabriel and Father John walk to the base of the Iguacu Falls immediately before the former’s ascent. Again the background music is clearly European. Faint strains from a guitar and an oboe wax unobtrusively into full orchestration as the two priests pray at a cairn marking the grave of Father Julien where Father Gabriel prepares himself spiritually for his personal invasion of the exotic and as yet virtually unevangelised region upstream. During his arduous climb, a crescendo of string music underscores both the symbolic character of that scene and the fundamental European quality of the culture which Father Gabriel bears.

A crucial musical element makes its entrée after Father Gabriel reaches the summit and, finding himself in a thoroughly alien environment dominated by visual imagery of the jungle and discordant sounds of its fauna, takes his simple oboe out of its bag and, in solitude, begins to play a simple melody. This piece, the second instance of music within the plot, subsequently becomes a *Leitmotiv* in *The Mission*, one which Morricone arranges variously to suit a variety of scenes. “Gabriel’s Oboe”,

as the tune is simply called, unquestionably became one of the best known pieces in the internationally marketed soundtrack. It is arguably the *de facto* signature tune of *The Mission*. An orchestrated version of “Gabriel’s Oboe” unfolds in the background as the Guaraní who have surrounded Father Gabriel peacefully lead him away and Altamirano asserts that with an orchestra the Jesuits could have conquered the entire South American continent.

This musical theme crops up repeatedly to accompany scenes in which salvation via the Gospel of Jesus Christ is attained. To cite but three major examples, tones from “Gabriel’s Oboe” are heard after the penitent Rodrigo Mendoza completes his ascent and is forgiven by the Guaraní whom he previously tormented; when Altamirano, escorted by Father Gabriel and other Jesuits, approaches San Carlos in a canoe and is greeted by cordons of residents of that *reducción*; and as Father Gabriel, bearing the ciborium, leads his congregation out of the burning chapel near the end of the film. On an appropriately much smaller scale, when Mendoza ponders his dilemma before the foreseen invasion of San Carlos and when Father Gabriel refuses to bless but nevertheless gives him a crucifix on the eve of the invasion of San Carlos, a few faint strains of “Gabriel’s Oboe” haunt the background as an unmistakable reminder of the possibility of Christian discipleship which the Jesuits have brought to the rain forest.

If the coming of Iberian missionary Roman Catholicism to the Guaraní at what would become the San Carlos mission at that early stage represented the confrontation of two clearly distinctive cultures, the interplay of the two ethnic groups in question in Asunción features their undeniable confluence. Morricone highlights both agreeable and exploitative dimensions of this economic and spiritual meeting in scenes played out in the Paraguay capital. Shortly after Rodrigo Mendoza is shown capturing slaves near the nascent San Carlos mission, he is depicted on horseback triumphantly leading these captives, bound and staggering along, through the streets of Asunción as pulsating pipe music is combined with the relentless hoofbeats of colonial horses. At the unidentified ecclesiastical festival there, urbanised Guaraní dance to boisterous, rhythmic music which, significantly enough, is impossible to identify as distinctly either tribal or European. Both visually and musically, the scene suggests the eventual synthesis of Spanish Christianity with Guaraní popular culture.

When Morricone wishes to underscore the germination of Roman Catholicism amongst the Guaraní, he employs measures from a choral "Ave Maria". Three instances of this liturgical pillar are in the solo singing of a Guaraní youth at Altamirano's public hearing in Asunción, when the Jesuit missionaries in question are seeking to impress this papal legate with the success of their endeavours, when Altamirano subsequently inspects San Carlos and is fascinated by the effectiveness of the Jesuits in transplanting European Catholicism to that remote site, and during the Mass which is celebrated as the joint Portuguese-Spanish colonial force invades San Carlos.

Like those of many other films, especially those for which Robert Bolt wrote the scripts, the plot of *The Mission* rests largely on dramatic tensions, some of which we have already discussed. Morricone fashioned much of his music to suit these elements. At one juncture after another one hears fairly conventional music of suspense in the background. These are undistinguished and of scant missiological consequence, however, and need not concern us at length. They involve orchestration, drum beats, and percussive thunder intended to signal and heighten tensions on the screen.

The final strains of Morricone's music are heard in the closing scene and in the credits, when a canoe full of Guaraní children paddle away from the devastated *reducción* and the previously discussed message about twentieth-century involvement of priests in Latin American liberation movements appears on the screen. The music is a relatively brief pastiche of earlier occurring elements, including a choral refrain with rhythmic drumming and "Gabriel's Oboe", all of which presumably accentuates the theme of the confluence of cultures in Latin America and the possible rôle of the clergy in continuing to participate in the socio-economic emancipation of the oppressed indigenous population.

Surprising many observers, Morricone did not receive an Academy Award for his contribution to *The Mission*, although he did get a Golden Globe for the same achievement. Instead, Herbie Hancock won the Oscar in the category "Best Original Score" for his work in *Round Midnight*. Morricone nevertheless garnered ever-increasing international attention and went on to compose the scores for such films as *Bugsy*, *The Untouchables* and *Everybody's Fine*, for all of which he received awards to add to his crowded trophy case.

Conclusion

Our conclusion about *The Mission* inescapably involves inter alia an evaluation of this film's intrinsic artistic merit. In brief, *The Mission* is a work with many obvious strengths, three of the most noteworthy of which are its photography, the background music, and the lucid presentation of the dilemma in which Father Gabriel and Rodrigo Mendoza find themselves when confronted by military intervention which tests their ethical convictions. On only a slightly more subtle level, the complex character of Luis Altamirano and the way in which he is employed as a narrator deserve accolades. These are all matters to which we have referred in varying degrees of detail in the present chapter. The input of photographer Chris Menges, composer Ennio Morricone, screenwriter Robert Bolt, and some of the actors (particularly Ray McAnally and, arguably to a lesser extent, Jeremy Irons) can be profusely lauded.

At the same time, *The Mission* can be justifiably criticised at several junctures. Among those which do not pertain directly to missiological issues (to which we shall turn our attention shortly) are the uneven development of the characters, the romanticised depiction of the Guaraní, the bungling of certain historical details in a film which purports to portray history accurately, the attempt of the film to be both an epic treatment of events in an important era in history and a microcosmic study of the behaviour of a few individual men during that period but the failure to achieve this ambitious two-fold objective, and the daemonizing caricature of some of the Iberian colonists in South America. The creators of *The Mission* appear to have sought to do more than was feasible and thus in the end failed to create the film which might otherwise have been possible had ambitions not outstripped resources and time. Their noble attempt reminds one of the internationally known dictum of the twentieth-century architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe: "Less is more".

Turning to specifically missiological matters, one can both praise and berate *The Mission*. In terms of basic expository value, it is clearly an educational piece which vividly rivets a little-known episode in missions history in the minds of viewers. Within this, certain topics are also lucidly highlighted. *The Mission* underscores boldly the occasionally strained nature of relations between Roman

Catholic missionaries on the one hand and Roman Catholic governments and colonists on the other. Furthermore, the plot calls attention to tensions between the Society of Jesus and the Vatican on the eve of the suppression of the Jesuits, clearly a significant theme in the history of foreign missions during the eighteenth century.

Missiological weaknesses which stand out in equally bold relief are the failure to shed any significant light on the culture and religious beliefs and practices of the Guaraní before they came into contact with Jesuit missionaries, the severely distorted portrayal of the maturity of the indigenous church which, as we have indicated earlier, did not feature any ordained Guaraní at the *reducciones* during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, contrary to the impression which is given in *The Mission*, the absence of more than the most fleeting depiction of how evangelistic work was actually pursued, and the absence of any discussion of the contextualisation of the Gospel.

For the purposes of the present study, it must be emphasised how well *The Mission* fits our overarching hypothesis concerning how writers and others who have depicted Jesuit missions, especially those in eighteenth-century Latin America, have shaped their subject material to serve contemporary intentions. To be sure, this is not made explicit in most of the film, although Bolt's blistering criticism of imperialism is apparent in his treatment of eighteenth-century colonial exploitation of the Guaraní. This, however, is not in the first instance presented as a contemporary matter, but by analogy its relevance becomes clear at the end of the film. The previously discussed epilogue which appears on the screen drives home the point, leaving little chance that viewers will overlook Bolt's perception of the parallels between the Jesuit defence of the Guaraní and recent advocacy of the rights of the economically dispossessed masses of Latin America, to some extent inspired by liberation theology.

Yet any viewer seeking a well-developed presentation of some prototype of liberation theology in eighteenth-century dress will not find it in *The Mission*. As indicated earlier, the public exposure of controversies related to liberation theology, perhaps most notably the confrontation between the Vatican and Leonardo Boff, in the mid-1980s made their mark on *The Mission*, where apparently they prompted the grafting of certain flourishes on Bolt's progressive script. To be sure, certain prevalent characteristics of this recent movement flavour aspects of the plot

and the dialogue. One sees the all too familiar simplistic bifurcation of daemonic exploiters and almost pristine, heroic indigenes as an apparent and pervasive theme, and with some imagination one could perceive the *reducciones* as forerunners of basic Christian communities. The common ownership of property at these mission villages harmonises with some models of society in liberation thought, although how the empowerment of their residents can be attributed to an innovative Christian theological current remains untold. Indeed, the theological dimension of *The Mission* is poorly developed; one could hardly expect it to be laid out in appreciable detail in a film of this sort. Little attention is paid to criticisms of orthodox theology or the challenges of “orthopraxis” to it. There is no probing of conventional Roman Catholic theology. Altamirano represents ecclesiastical power, not orthodoxy as an agent of oppression, so his fascinating character does not illuminate this matter. Father Gabriel, on the other hand, bears many marks of a traditional Jesuit while serving as a guardian of the Guaraní, although he is apparently a pacifist, not a militant theological liberationist. His dynamic if rough-hewn counterpart, Rodrigo Mendoza, evinces no noteworthy grounding in theology. All in all, the place of liberation theology in *The Mission* remains one of unrealised potential.

Notes

1. Daniel Berrigan, *The Mission: A Film Journal* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986), p. 74.
2. Long the normative pattern in Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox missionary endeavours, the sacramental mode of mission emphasises the establishment of churches (and, with them, zones of Christianity in otherwise non-Christian regions) and the celebration of the sacraments (as partly opposed, for example, to the kerygmatic mode of mission with its primary emphasis on the proclamation of the Gospel through preaching and effecting decisions by individuals to become followers of Jesus Christ upon hearing this proclamation; this mode has dominated Protestant missions history).
3. "Light relief", *The Times*, 25 February 1987, p. 12.
4. John Mansell, "Trumpet heralded tunesmith's talent", *Variety*, CCCLXI, no. 11 (22-28 January 1996), pp. 89-90.
5. David Rooney, "Work of Notes", *Variety*, CCCLXI, no. 11 (22-28 January 1996), pp. 89-90.
6. *Ibid.*, p 90.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE NOVELISATION OF *THE MISSION*

Robert Bolt capitalised on the publicity which *The Mission* was receiving after it garnered the coveted *Palme d'Or* award in Cannes in 1986 by writing a novelisation of his filmscript. Penguin published it later that year under the same title. With considerable justification, many literary critics generally refuse to take novelisations seriously. Rarely are they reviewed in major publications. According to conventional attitudes towards novelisations, they are merely rewrites of filmscripts in fictional dress and lack significant narrative comment, refined character development, and other desiderata of fictional works. Unlike many other works in this sub-genre, however, *The Mission* is quite worthy of standing on its own feet as a literary creation.

One need only juxtapose it with the published version of that decade's other highly acclaimed British film, *Chariots of Fire*, which David Puttnam also produced, to appreciate the quality of Bolt's writing. The script for that work was written by Colin Welland and is a highly creditable piece which contributed heavily towards the conferring of an Academy Award for "Best Film" of 1981. When assessed with the touchstone of conventional literary standards, however, the novelisation quickly turned out by William J. Weatherby and published by Granada of London, is an abominable rehash which makes virtually no use of potentially valuable conventions of fiction. By contrast, it would not be unreasonable for anyone unfamiliar with the history of the production to surmise from reading and viewing the two versions of Bolt's work about the fate of the Jesuit endeavour that the film was derived from a pre-existing novel.

In many respects, this novelisation yields a richer harvest than does the film, and one can attribute this only in part to the limits that cinematography imposes. There is a partial shift of emphasis from Spanish to Portuguese imperialism and courtly intrigue. Some of Bolt's characters emerge not only with more carefully drawn personalities than their counterparts on the screen but indeed as quite different people. This, as we shall see, is particularly the case with Father Gabriel. Most of the plot remains the same in the novelisation, but the *Vorgeschichte* to it that

Bolt includes in the book reveals much about the personalities of Rodrigo Mendoza and Father Gabriel. Luis Altamirano also unfolds as a quite different character in print. Perhaps most significant is the shift of primary emphasis from Altamirano to Mendoza. A character of great importance in the film, this *conquistador* moves squarely to the centre in the book without diminishing the significance of either Altamirano or Father Gabriel. In fact, the greater focus on Mendoza enhances both of them and places their ethical dilemmas into bolder relief. In a macrocosmic sense, moreover, and in harmony with the repeated emphasis in Bolt's dramas and screenplays, the novelisation concentrates on the development of individual characters in their historical context while the film seeks in part to be an epic and to conscientise viewers to the relevance of the eighteenth-century conflicts it depicts to twentieth-century liberation theology.

This relatively long novelisation spans 283 pages of moderately sized type. The text is not formally divided into chapters, although at several turning points in the plot vertical lines separate segments of the text. The book appeared only as a paperback and does not contain any illustrations other than two dramatic still photographs from the film on its front cover, one of which depicts Rodrigo Mendoza as he boldly declares at Altamirano's hearing in Asunción that Cabeza's denial of the existence of slavery and the exploitation of indigenous labourers in Paraguay is "a lie", the other showing Father Gabriel bearing the ciborium out of the burning chapel at San Carlos. These photographs are superimposed on one of the Iguazu Falls. On the back cover a synopsis of the plot correctly identifies this "powerful new novel" as a book about Mendoza, "a cool, callous soldier of fortune and slave-trader who, in the heat of the moment, murders his own brother. In his anguish he turns to God and becomes a lay brother at a Jesuit mission deep in the heart of the jungle, just as the conflict between Church and State is escalating". In Britain the book sold for a modest £2.95.

Plot Summary

The plot of the novelisation differs sufficiently from that of the film to warrant a synopsis of the former here, paying particular attention to those junctures at which it follows its own course. Fittingly, the story begins not with Altamirano but with Rodrigo Mendoza, who, we learn, was born in 1711 in Cádiz, the port on the southwestern coast of Spain. His mother has imparted a sense of honesty in him but dies giving birth to his brother, Felipe, in 1722. Rodrigo's alcoholic father, whom he dislikes, drowns while intoxicated and working on a lighter in the harbour in 1725. Rodrigo caringly places Felipe with the Sisters of San Fernando, sells the small boat he has inherited, and secures employment on a ship bound for Buenos Aires.

Arriving in that colonial port after a wretched voyage on which he is compelled to perform menial labour and is clearly the victim of his environment, the exploited and vulnerable youth is buffeted by local imperialist forces in morally degenerate surroundings and accordingly begins a tragic descent that leads to his destruction. Before reaching Buenos Aires, he notices slave ships at Montevideo "making stealthily for the far side of the bay". This proves to be an omen of Mendoza's eventual moral quagmire. He secures employment on a barge that is travelling to Asunción, a job that proves to be virtual slavery and exposes him to the baseness of the colonists for whom he toils. After five weeks of river travel, the vessel reaches that capital of the Río de la Plata. There Mendoza is summarily told to leave. When he demands the modest wage promised him at the outset of the journey, an employee of the barge captain disingenuously denies having made such an assurance of remuneration and viciously beats him with the horn handle of his whip into a state of semi-consciousness.

Nearly indigent and stranded in Asunción, Mendoza notices a band of armed *conquistadores*, one of whom offers him employment assisting in the capturing of slaves. Needing money to send to Cádiz for the maintenance of his brother and ignoring a warning by a tortilla vendor, he overlooks the illegality of the practice and, making a momentous decision, accepts the proposition. *En route* to remote sites upcountry, Mendoza learns about the slave trade and how it overlaps with the nominally legal *encomienda* practice, under which Spanish colonists were

permitted to coerce indigenes to work for them for part of each year. The young immigrant acquires a dagger and, armed with it, feels like a man, although his primary task is carrying wine for the *conquistadores*. He witnesses their capture of Guaraní, their sexual abuse of female captives, and the painful death of one *conquistador* who has been struck by an arrow. The party also crosses into Portuguese colonial territory and purchases twenty-five young Guaraní in the village of Cruzeiro do Oeste. After a return trek of more than two months, they reach Asunción, where colonial officials allow the illegal but profitable traffic in slaves to continue without interference.

After returning to Asunción, Mendoza's employer, Victorio, refuses to give him more than one-fifth of the wage of five *dineros* that he has promised him. Still only fifteen years old, the young Spaniard stabs Victorio in his sleep, thereby becoming a murderer, and steals a large quantity of coins from his victim's wallet. Feeling compunction later that night, however, Mendoza retains only five *dineros* and discards the remainder in the river. He subsequently confesses his mortal sin to a priest, who absolves him. Mendoza then admits that he has committed a greater sin, namely lying, for which the priest assigns a penance of saying Hail Marys. Impenitent, Mendoza continues to wander along the wide path of dishonesty. Further parting with his late mother's admonitions, he acquires a sword, a Swiss baselard that he eventually uses frequently on Guaraní and European colonists alike after taking fencing lessons from a French teacher in Asunción. Mendoza kills his first Guaraní on an expedition to capture slaves but feels no compunction for this act. His sexual debut occurs in a graphically portrayed rape of a young Guaraní girl captured in the forest. On the other hand, Mendoza conscientiously sends money to the orphanage in Cádiz for the maintenance of his younger brother. The Jesuit who delivers the payment informs the Mother Superior in charge of the orphanage that Mendoza is a *conquistador*, but when she rebukes him in a letter some months later he brushes aside her admonition as unrealistic and continues to pursue his increasingly lucrative career in the slave traffic. At the same time, Mendoza abandons his practice of going to mass and confession. At age nineteen he kills the man who initially refused to pay him for his first employment on the river barge and an onlooker who insists that his success in this duel was a matter of luck. The blood-stained teenager realises that he has become an habitual murderer and accepts himself

as such, though without hope of a better life. On a subsequent expedition, Mendoza kills Tiberio, who has been the leader of the band of *conquistadores* which he has joined, and assumes command of the group. As its *de facto* chief, he receives vastly more compensation from Don Cabeza, the Captain-General in Asunción, who profits from the slave trade and appreciates Mendoza's ability to bring large numbers of captives to that city. With his increased funds, Mendoza purchases a small farm near Asunción and rents a house there. He accepts the advice of the nun in Cádiz who has been administering the care of Felipe that the youth, then ten years of age and no longer eligible to stay at the orphanage, be sent to a boarding school in Montevideo. Felipe enrolls there at his brother's expense and spends three months annually with Rodrigo in Asunción, where he admires his rapidly ageing brother but notices that other colonists shun him while exploiting the labour of the Guaraní whom Rodrigo and others deliver as *de facto* slaves. When the sensitive and charming Felipe turns eighteen, his doting brother sends him on a tour of Europe with a tutor. This event brings to a close the first component of the novelisation, virtually none of which is covered in the film. Bolt uses fifty-eight pages to establish Rodrigo Mendoza's decline and set up the contrast between him and his vastly more innocent brother.

Immediately thereafter, the action shifts to the dramatic execution of Father Julien Dupleix over the Iguazu Falls which occurs practically at the start of the film, *i.e.* during the first segment of Altamirano's narrative. Bolt's portrayal of the first attempt to develop a remote mission station above the falls is sketchy and does not deviate significantly from what is depicted on the screen, although one of Father Gabriel's colleagues, Father Sebastian, whom Daniel Berrigan plays in the film, has a different personality stemming from his career as a sergeant in an unidentified "Royal Troop".

Highly significant, however, is Bolt's biographical sketch of Father Gabriel O'Donnell, the central Jesuit figure in both the film and the novelisation. In the former, he is an almost ethereal figure without a national identity or a life before reaching the Guaraní. In the latter, by contrast, the formation of his personality and the unfolding of his prophetic ministry are presented in significant detail in a lengthy flashback that illuminates his childhood and years as a priest and political prisoner in Ireland early in the eighteenth century. Growing up as the son of an

impoverished cottier in an environment of severe religious discrimination, he excels in Latin and agrees to become a priest. Gabriel receives his theological education at Jesuit institutions in France and Rome, where he also acquires training in music. He defends the vow of celibacy while witnessing some of his colleagues violate it. Upon completion of his studies abroad, Gabriel returns to Ireland and functions as a village priest in Tipperary, thereby conducting a ministry that is illegal under British law but nevertheless is marginally tolerated. The filling of starving Catholic bellies complements his cure of souls in that impoverished area. Gabriel's ministry is also prophetic; he speaks out about economic injustice while some of his colleagues in the priesthood urge caution. This phase of his career and his freedom end after he participates in a protest by indigent parishioners who appeal to Charles O'Burke, a wealthy convert to Anglicanism, for bread. O'Burke, a justice of the peace, has Gabriel and five of the other leaders of the protest prosecuted and imprisoned; Gabriel's sentence is for life. During his incarceration in a squalid prison, he ministers to fellow inmates, is severely beaten, and undergoes a temporary loss of faith before O'Burke pardons him on condition that he leave Ireland. Gabriel returns to Rome, the headquarters of the Society of Jesus, and agrees to become a missionary wherever the leaders of the order wish to send him. He finds himself at San Miguel, where he quickly masters the Guaraní tongue, becomes "a model priest" despite occasional "bouts of temper", evinces meticulous concern for discipline and order as well as love of the Guaraní and, after only four years, becomes Superior of the mission.

The establishment of the San Carlos mission is somewhat different in the novelisation from its grounding in the film. In the former, Father Gabriel and his colleagues argue about missionary strategy before he scales the Iguazu Falls seeking to evangelise the Guaraní who have put Father Julien Dupleix to death. Bolt describes his proclamation of Christianity in much greater detail and illustrates varying Guaraní reactions to it by juxtaposing those of the chief, Hacugh, who is open to Christianity, and a shaman, Tanretopra, who clearly resents Father Gabriel as a challenge to his own spiritual prerogative and urges rejection of him, possibly by violent means.

In any case, in the novelisation the Jesuits soon succeed in gaining a foothold amongst the Guaraní and, aided by some of these indigenes, begin to erect a very rudimentary chapel and other buildings. Almost immediately thereafter, however,

Rodrigo Mendoza appears and, in a scene less dramatic than that in the film, begins to take captives. Father Gabriel's attempts without success to convince him to release these people. Learning from Father Gabriel about this extension of the slave trade, Father Ribero, the Jesuit Provincial in Asunción, approaches both Don Cabeza and Mendoza to complain about it and request that it cease. This ecclesiastic reminds them that King Philip III of Spain has granted the Society of Jesus the land above the Iguacu Falls and demands that others, especially people engaged in the slave trade, remain out of it. Don Cabeza is recalcitrant and insists that he will seek to have the royal charter amended. Bolt thereby sets up another dimension of dramatic tension.

Carlota, the damsel whose affection Rodrigo Mendoza seeks but Felipe Mendoza wins in the film, acquires an Iberian past in the novelisation. In Spain she is Carlota María Herminda Teodosia Antonia de la Cadenade Villasante, a woman of noble blood who acquires a title of *condesa* but, after the death of her parents, emigrates to Asunción while she is still in her early twenties. There she quickly gains access to the upper echelons of colonial society and attracts the Mendoza brothers. Rodrigo seeks to impress the bored Carlota with his skills as a hunter and impromptu amateur *matador*. She rejects his proposal of marriage, however, and informs him of her plans to marry Felipe. As in the film, the despondent Rodrigo finds them nude in bed at an inn during what we here learn is the Guaraní feast of the Madonna, but in the novelisation he responds to this by spitting in his brother's face. In the ensuing duel Rodrigo dispatches Felipe more quickly and less dramatically than in the film.

The action then returns to San Carlos and a scene that does not appear on the screen. It allows Bolt to devote more attention to how Father Gabriel and his colleagues succeeded in exposing the Guaraní there more fully to Christianity through the desire of some of the latter to acquire literacy. While teaching the arts of reading and writing, the Jesuits recruit some of the Guaraní to assist in the construction of the chapel. Father Gabriel finds his own faith tested while responding to questions about Christianity. The Guaraní remain divided on the issue of conversion, and their shaman continues to resist, although under Hacugh's leadership more evince a willingness to listen to the missionaries. In a conversion with Father Gabriel,

the shaman acknowledges, "You have won today and may win tomorrow" but presciently avers that "in the end you will lose" (p. 139).

Before effecting any conversions, Father Gabriel is called to Asunción at the behest of the Provincial, Father Ribero, to deliberate the appointment of a Guaraní named Ibaye to succeed Gabriel as head of the San Miguel station. The Provincial reluctantly approves this move after Gabriel expresses full confidence in Ibaye. Ribero also approves the establishment of the San Carlos mission, which by then is a *fait accompli*. The Provincial informs Father Gabriel about Mendoza's fratricide and that Carlota has asked to speak with Gabriel about Mendoza, who is in a Jesuit hospice. Father Gabriel initially refuses but subsequently relents. In the ensuing conversation, Carlota informs him that Mendoza wishes to talk with him. Gabriel replies that he loathes Mendoza and agrees to meet him only after Carlota suggests that Mendoza might want to discuss the five Guaraní captured above the Iguazu Falls.

This proves not to be the case. The initial conversation between Father Gabriel and Mendoza is more detailed in the novelisation and essentially different in some theological respects. Acting fully as a priest, the Jesuit interlocutor suggests that the former slave captor bear his weapons to a point above the falls as a propitiation for his sin. By contrast, in the film, Father Gabriel asks Mendoza to name his own penance. They also discuss the difference between remorse and regret, a nuance absent from the film. Mendoza agrees to the proposed penance and arduously lugs his military hardware to San Carlos in the company of several Jesuits, one of whom, Father Sebastian - not Father John, as in the film - resent the severity of this imposition and urges Gabriel to alleviate it and temporarily relieves Mendoza of his unwieldy burden by severing the rope which connects him to it. In another nuance, Father Gabriel temporarily doubts the wisdom of such a harsh penance, whereas in the film this Jesuit evinces no such self-doubt.

In any case, the party eventually reaches the new San Carlos mission. In an emotionally charged moment, Hacugh cuts loose and hurls into the river the penitential burden. At the station Mendoza gradually warms to the Guaraní, especially the women and their children, and learns to weave while Father Gabriel discusses basic theological matters and white religious hypocrisy with the shaman. Old women, as opposed to bare-breasted adolescents in the film, accept Mendoza into the tribe

and signify this adoption by painting his body. The erstwhile slave trader finds it difficult to accept that God has forgiven him and, in another departure from the film, insists that he be admitted to the Society of Jesus because if the Jesuits accept him as a brother, this supposedly would prove divine forgiveness. In the wake of his declaration of Christian faith and vows, Hacugh and many other Guaraní convert to Christianity.

Another major section of the novelisation that does not occur in the film is the portrayal of political events in Portugal that militate against the continued existence of the Society of Jesus in that country and its colonies. Bolt narrates in detail the rise of Sebastião José de Carvalho e Mello, or the Marquês of Pombal, to power in Portugal in the middle of the eighteenth century and explains this crafty politician's intense dislike of the Society of Jesus as allegedly a hindrance to his plans for the modernisation of that country. More than any other single factor, Bolt clearly believes, Pombal's political ambition lay at the heart of the campaign to suppress the Society of Jesus. Bolt further comments on Pombal's willingness to exchange the Portuguese colony of Sacramento for part of the Spanish land in central South America, including the Mission Territory in which the Jesuits had established many *reducciones*. This was in accordance with the terms of the Treaty of Madrid of 1750.

Bolt also develops the character of Luis Altamirano before this papal emissary arrives in Latin America to investigate the possible consequences of the Treaty of Madrid for Catholic missions in Spanish and Portuguese colonies. No less than Pombal, we learn, this complex, erstwhile Jesuit is a shrewd man of intrigue and a womaniser though also a churchman who is genuinely concerned about the survival of the Society of Jesus in Europe and overseas. When the two men meet in Lisbon, Pombal seeks to extract from him a promise *a priori* that he will recommend the closure of the Jesuit missions in the lands that Spain has transferred to Portugal. The calculating Altamirano refuses to make such a commitment. Instead, Bolt establishes another dimension of the dramatic tension that forms part of the backbone of the novelisation as well as the film by having Altamirano explain briefly that with regard to the future of the missions his theological and pragmatic sides are at war with one another.

Another significant if hardly major player in the Iberian intrigue underlying the plot of the novelisation is Hontar, the Portuguese diplomat who co-operates with Don Cabeza and seeks to pressure Altamirano into recommending closure of the missions. Bolt's portrayal of this historic character is relatively weak, however; Hontar does little other than serve as a structural link between Lisbon and Asunción, to which he has been posted.

After considering these characters, Bolt returns briefly to San Carlos to describe Mendoza's progress as a Jesuit novice. The other members of the order there react variously to their new brother; one in particular is sceptical of his worth and doubts the sincerity of his conversion. On the other hand, the Guaraní accept Mendoza and, eventually regarding them as his equals, he is able to get closer to them than do the other Jesuits. After finding his spiritual moorings at San Carlos, the former slave hunter laboriously becomes literate.

It is this Mendoza whom Father Gabriel insists accompany him and others from the mission to Altamirano's hearing in Asunción. Gabriel believes that Mendoza will be in a position to testify to the *de facto* institution of slavery in Spanish possessions. Mendoza initially balks, fearing the surroundings in which he killed his brother, but subsequently relents and respects his vow of obedience. After reaching Asunción, the Jesuits from San Carlos and Father Ribero, the Provincial, repeatedly rehearse the testimony they are to give.

In the meantime, Altamirano has arrived in Asunción, where he avails himself of Don Cabeza's hospitality and is impressed by the visible piety of the Guaraní Christians. Differing from the plot of the film, it becomes apparent at this point in the novelisation that Altamirano has already decided that the missionaries must withdraw from their field. The hearing itself proceeds much the same as in the film, although the testimonies are more detailed and settlers' comments, invariably hostile to the Jesuits, are included. Minor differences include Father Gabriel's awareness that the Mission Territory has been transferred to Portugal, a discussion of the rôle of music in evangelising the Guaraní, an allegation that they are cannibals, and an accusation that the Guaraní are perpetual drunkards, a charge which the rhetorically nimble Gabriel turns back on Don Cabeza, himself no stranger to the grape. At the conclusion of this hearing, Altamirano insists that he must visit at least one mission, although Bolt comments authorially that this is only for show;

the papal emissary does not wish to give the correct impression that he has already decided to recommend closure.

Altamirano finds San Miguel highly impressive, not least economically, although now Guaraní piety irritates him. Considering the dependence of large numbers of indigenes on the survival of the *reducciones*, he begins to realise more fully the implications of the moral dilemma he faces. As in the film, Altamirano therefore seeks to effect a compromise whereby the Portuguese Crown would guarantee the continuation of the missions in the territory it has acquired from Spain. Hontar and Don Cabeza resist this, and the former makes it clear that far from being willing to compromise, Pombal is threatening to expel the Society of Jesus from Portugal if Altamirano does not recommend terminating the missionary presence in the Portuguese colonies in South America. Altamirano has already surmised this.

Thereupon Altamirano decides to continue upriver to San Carlos, where he finds the beauty and power of its natural setting overwhelming, but the perplexity of the dilemma he still faces makes it impossible for him to pray. He soon renders his decision. Departing from the plot of the film, where he directly orders the residents of the *reducción* to vacate it, Altamirano here informs the Guaraní at San Carlos that they must obey the orders of the Portuguese king. Furthermore, after this meeting Gabriel admits to his distinguished visitor that he has failed to convince him to fight on behalf of the Guaraní. Altamirano confesses that his decision was a foregone conclusion before he arrived at San Carlos, but the reason he offers for visiting that mission has changed. In the film, Altamirano explains that he came to San Carlos to persuade the Jesuits there not to resist closure; in the novelisation, he tells Father Gabriel that he has made the arduous journey in order to show Don Cabeza that the church cannot be taken for granted. Altamirano and Gabriel also discuss the former's dilemma in some detail, and the former admits his belief that God never speaks to him.

The lengthy battle scene in which the film culminates is severely abridged in the novelisation. Certain minor changes occur in the latter. The morally distressed Altamirano refuses to bless the Spanish-Portuguese expeditionary force in Asunción before it departs to force the Guaraní off the *reducciones*. As the soldiers advance on San Carlos, Mendoza leads the preparations for its defence and tells Hacugh that his own ways no longer are those of Christ. While Mendoza and six Guaraní

(not a combined force of indigenes and Jesuits, as in the film) are conducting a nocturnal raid on the Spanish and Portuguese soldiers, Mendoza meets Gaspacho, the Afro-American *conquistador* who betrayed him many years earlier, but spares his life. Gaspacho responds by abandoning his Iberian military employers and joining Mendoza. Father Gabriel's refusal to bless Mendoza before the battle is portrayed essentially as in the film.

In another key respect Bolt chose to follow the film rather than his own original plan. It will be recalled that in his filmscript Father Gabriel and the remnant of the congregation perish in the burning chapel, "a Catholic *Götterdämmerung*", in the words of Daniel Berrigan, who convinced director Roland Joffé to transform this passive perishing into a meaningful, active scene. In the novelisation, as in the film, therefore, Father Gabriel carries the monstrance bearing the metaphysical, sacramental Jesus Christ out of the chapel at the head of a procession. Both Mendoza and Gabriel die at the hands of the soldiers, although they fall differently in print from how they perish in the film. In the wake of the battle, there is no concluding scene involving Guaraní children, although that in which Altamirano discusses the slaughter with Hontar and Don Cabeza is expanded. One slight if arguably significant departure from the dialogue at this point is that in the film Altamirano responds to Hontar's declaration that the world demands the use of force by stating pensively, "No, Señor Hontar. Thus have we made the world. Thus have I made it". In the novelisation, the papal emissary does not utter those final five words which place a special burden of guilt on himself as an individual and on the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church which he represents.

The Question of Language

In creating screenplays, Bolt wrote English (or overwhelmingly English) dialogue for fictitious and historical characters who presumably would have uttered their words in such languages as Arabic, Russian, and Spanish, and the lines which he put into their mouths have often had a Boltian flavour. In the novelisation of *The Mission*, this is also the case. What separates this text from those of most of his screenplays, however, is the amount of foreign words and phrases which are not

rendered into English. In most instances, these are spoken by Rodrigo Mendoza and other *conquistadores*. To cite but a few examples, Bolt quite frequently drops into the text such individual words and terms as *camino real* (royal road), *muchacho* (lad), *gracias* (thank you), *capón* (capon), *hidalgo* (squire), *Madre de Dios* (Mother of God), *señoritas* (young ladies), and *caballeros* (horsemen). To be sure, some of these expressions are widely understood in Anglophone circles, while the untranslated Spanish sentences which Bolt includes are unquestionably challenging. “*Tiene cojones, este hombre*” (“He has courage, this man”), shrugs Mendoza after learning that some of his fellow *conquistadores* have deserted him and sold to Don Cabeza the slaves they have captured. “*Me cago en Dios*” (“I defecate on God”), thunders Don Cabeza after learning that the Jesuits have opened a mission above the Iguazu Falls. “*Poco del mundo*” (“Bizarre”), responds one of Mendoza’s erstwhile fellow slave-hunters upon learning of his conversion.

We cannot know precisely why Bolt chose to add these elements to the dialogue, but it seems most plausible that he did so in the hope that they would add a dash of authenticity to a plot about which he does not appear to have known a great deal. To some linguistically sophisticated readers, of course, the presence of the untranslated Spanish words, phrases, and sentences may well help in fleshing out characters who are otherwise only skeletally drawn. What impact they have on other readers presumably varies. In any case, what is striking is that in Bolt’s script most of the lengthier Spanish components in the dialogue are voiced by *conquistadores* and underscore the vulgar dimension of their personalities and their disregard and even contempt for missionary Christianity, particularly when it stands in the way of their economic self-interest.

Having summarised the overall narrative structure of the novelisation and certain aspects of Bolt’s use of Spanish in his attempt to make his written tale ring true, we shall now examine how he developed specific themes within it, focussing chiefly on his portrayal of principal characters who were caught in the moral dilemma that the threatened closure of the *reducciones* posed. These characters interact with European colonists and the Guaraní, the portrayal of whom is indirectly critical to central themes in *The Mission*. A discussion of Bolt’s depiction of these peoples, both as generalised ethnic groups and a few specific individuals, is also necessary. We shall then survey Bolt’s discussion of ethical, theological, and missiological

issues and conclude with a judgement of what his overarching literary purpose was in the novelisation and how this causes it to differ significantly from the film.

The Moral Death and Rebirth of Rodrigo Mendoza

To an appreciably greater extent than the film, though quite in harmony with Bolt's earlier works, the novelisation is a study of individual characters. Accordingly, we shall now examine more closely the literary devices Bolt employs to portray his central *personae*, Rodrigo Mendoza, Father Gabriel O'Donnell, and Luis Altamirano, highlight critical milestones on their spiritual journeys along roads that take them through historical dilemmas in an era of exploitative imperialism, and analyse how they seek to cope with the moral predicaments into which historical circumstances thrust them. Because the novelisation begins with Mendoza and focusses more on the severe contours of his enmeshed life than on the tribulations that either Father Gabriel or Altamirano face, we shall commence with this *conquistador* turned Jesuit novice.

Rodrigo Mendoza's personal dilemma at a critical juncture in history would have little meaning or literary depth had not Bolt spent dozens of pages narrating in considerable detail the early spiritual formation, moral destruction, and rebirth of this principal character. Bolt loses little time in establishing that Mendoza is morally handicapped from the day he disembarks in South America. To be sure, a seed of morality has been sown and sprouted in him. At his mother's knee in Cádiz, the youth acquires the rudiments - though apparently not more - of a spiritual upbringing. In this respect Bolt emphasises her entreating him to be honest but mentions virtually nothing else. Later, we learn, his mother has sought to instill in him the evil of weapons, a lesson ultimately lost on her son. She dies when Rodrigo is only eleven years old, leaving Rodrigo and Felipe to the care of an alcoholic father. Upon becoming an orphan three years later in 1725, Rodrigo affectionately brings his three-year-old brother Felipe to a convent, where Rodrigo makes an apparently sincere commitment to pay for his maintenance. "All Mendoza's affection was turned towards his small brother, enfolding the child" (p. 2), an almost maudlin description that initiates the description of a relationship that ends in

fratricide. When the Mother Superior of that institution inquires about his trade, the unlettered youth resists the temptation to mislead her, for “his mother had told him that it was wrong to lie, that way perdition lay” (p. 3) and replies that he, like his deceased father, in a lighterman. Furthermore, Bolt underscores repeatedly the sincerity of Rodrigo’s intention to honour his commitment to pay for his brother’s maintenance. He also emphasises, however, that Mendoza’s spiritual moorings are weak and that his maternally instilled morality becomes subordinated to his pragmatic strain. The latter emerges as an attribute which seems necessary for his survival as an orphan without any visible system of support in a hostile world.

Possibly reflecting his hostility to colonialism, Bolt emphasises that the challenges to Rodrigo Mendoza’s fragile moral development begin when he embarks for the New World, having signed on as a very poorly remunerated servant to the sailors who man a decadent ship called the *Concepción*. Symbolic of both his lack of stature on this ironically named vessel, he “slept in the night alone among the reeking anchor cables” (p. 7). Mendoza suffers exploitation on board, especially at the hands of a colleague ironically named Salvador, who compels him to do menial tasks and attempts to steal Mendoza’s money. In response to this threat, Mendoza commits his first violent act recorded in *The Mission*. “He pressed his face near to the throat of his enemy, who went quiet and then screamed”. A seasoned sailor on board witnesses this wolfish behaviour and remarks presciently, “Holy Mother, who would have thought he had such a devil in him?” (pp. 7-8)

If Mendoza’s experiences on board reveal a daemonic germ in his personality, his behaviour in Asunción, where, symbolically enough, amid the churches “everything lay beneath a pall of fine white dust” and both the indigenes and the Spanish colonists appear to be strangers in an uncomfortable climate (pp. 8-9), presages in even more lucid terms his downward moral spiral in South America. Again, Bolt underscores that this is at least in part a response to efforts of rapacious and violent participants in the colonial venture to exploit him. His attempts to earn both his own support and that of his brother through physical labour come to virtually naught because of further exploitation at the hands of unprincipled and violent colonists. His initial employer, Palacio, beats him nearly senseless for demanding promised wages (p. 12). Only then does the indigent Mendoza ignorantly throw in his lot with *conquistadores* in Asunción who offer him marginally more money

for performing initially unspecified services (p. 14). Whether the vulnerable youth, who is still below the age of accountability by most standards, would have become a *conquistador* had he been in less dire straits and known from the outset what this form of employment entailed we cannot know. In any case, one of the *conquistadores* informs him that they illegally collect slaves, Mendoza evinces no concern about either legality or moral illegitimacy. Instead, driven by his need for a livelihood, he “could think only of the twelve dineros a year, so he just said, ‘Yes, señor’” (pp. 15-16).

Mendoza’s desire for social acceptance in a male-dominated colonial society also contributes to his moral downfall. Symbolic of his lowly, exploited status, when the troupe of *conquistadores* enters Portuguese colonial territory to purchase slaves, “Mendoza was sent to sleep among the horses” (p. 22). After he acquires a dagger at the behest of Gaspacho, “he felt a man” (p. 19), and when that Afro-American *conquistador* calls him “a prudent man” during their first expedition into the mountains, Mendoza realises that this “is the first time he had been called a man” and is consequently “filled with a peculiar mixture of fear and exultation” (p. 20). This weapon, of course, proves to be the first instrument of his gradual moral undoing.

Mendoza does not commit murder until after witnessing *conquistadores* violently take Guaraní captives and rape some of them, see one of his band die of a wound caused by an arrow, and suffer further mistreatment at the hands of his employers. Victorio’s refusal to pay him the wage upon which they have agreed triggers the increasingly hardened youth to secure his money through violence. Mendoza is not a totally insensitive killer, however, when he ends Victorio’s life. The murder is not premeditated. Bolt writes that his victim was getting out of bed with the youth’s dagger at his neck “when, in wrath and panic, Mendoza struck”. After Victorio falls dead, “Mendoza was dumbfounded. It had been so easy” (p. 25). As indicated in the Plot Summary, by this time murder weighs less heavily on his conscience than either dishonesty or theft of Victorio’s money. When he confesses his sins to a priest in Asunción, however, we gain further insight into the frailty of his moral upbringing. Mendoza remembers his mother and takes comfort in the relativity of her ethical instruction: “She did not expect him to be a saint. She had only told him to be no more guilty than other men were” (p. 28).

When Mendoza acquires his baselard and embarks on his next expedition to capture Guaraní, he engages in further violence, killing one of them for the first time. This indigene, armed with a spear, “appeared above Mendoza’s head, only to plunge down upon a levelled sword. As the blade came out through his back, his face came very close to Mendoza’s”. The youth watches his victim die but apparently feels no remorse or other feeling of guilt, as Bolt emphasises, “finding the sight even less disturbing than Victorio’s blood had been” (p. 32). Illustrating his moral confusion, when Mendoza subsequently attempts to take additional fencing lessons with his peculiar sword, “he thought that because his weapon was not designed for killing men it was not evil” (p. 34). The fencing master dislikes his aggressiveness, so Mendoza uses his money to purchase a musket, a pistol, hide boots, and cotton armour. Gaspacho assures him that in his new attire he looks like “a real conquistador” (p. 35).

Bolt uses the unfolding of Mendoza’s sexuality as another trenchant symbol of his moral decline. On his first expedition with the *conquistadores*, he finds their raping of Guaraní repugnant. Bolt describes the behaviour of the *conquistadores* and the youth’s reaction graphically: “When it grew dark two of them pulled out the prettier of the two women. Tiberio took her with oaths and grunts, calling forth hissing groans and laughs for those waiting their turn. Mendoza went and hid in the undergrowth. When they shouted for him, he did not reply”. Only when the raping ends near dawn does he return to the camp (p. 21). Immediately after killing a Guaraní, however, Mendoza is confronted with another opportunity to surrender his virginity. This, too, is given him by his association with the *conquistadores*. Gaspacho suggests that he have intercourse with one of the female captives. “It is easy, and pleasurable”, the Afro-American assure him. Mendoza replies, “I will consider it”. Gaspacho insists that instead of reflecting on the matter his young colleague should simply participate. Mendoza relents and allows his desire to overcome his scruples. Choosing the youngest of the girls as his partner, “he led her into a dark part of the jungle, looked round and then gazed at her nakedness. As he did so, he became excited and said, ‘Lie down,’” Bolt underscores the youth’s inexperience: “His penis stiffened, and he began to move it towards her crotch but could not find his way. ‘Help me,’ he said. Her hand came down. He came. Liking him, she lay still under him for a while and his penis began to stiffen again.

This time he thrust while she began to whine, and he came again". The *conquistadores* laugh audibly when the girl begins to perform fellatio on Mendoza, prompting him to draw his sword and threaten them, "trembling with rage and shame, but they got away". When Gaspacho returns and gives him a second opportunity to copulate with the same girl, Mendoza declines. "He returned to the fire and wrapped a blanket around himself, crestfallen" (p. 33). On the most rudimentary level of human conduct, the young Spanish immigrant has taken on the appearance of a *conquistador* and exploited defenceless people.

Almost immediately after this episode, Mendoza receives the previously mentioned letter from the Mother Superior in Cádiz criticising him for participating in the slave trade and asking him to "consider how you would feel if you were the merchandise" (p. 36). This admonition briefly touches Mendoza, who seeks out the priest who has absolved him of his first murder and explains that he is a slave-trader. This cleric again vacillates. He initially declares the practice to be "wrong" but, upon hearing that Mendoza conducts his dirty work for Don Cabeza, reveals that he is beholden to the state. When Mendoza suggests that he should inform his employer that in the eyes of the church he is capturing Guaraní "not as slaves but as *encomienda*", the priest envisions "his quiet little benefice disappearing" and assures the youth that he will absolve him of his sin, even if Mendoza announces that he is planning another expedition. Receiving no moral guidance from the church, Mendoza justifies his own conduct and rejects the admonition from Cádiz by convincing himself that Sister Angela "had no experience of life". This effectively severs his spiritual umbilical cord: "Thereafter, he ceased going to confessional and also to church, and no longer prayed to his mother" (p. 37). In a subsequent letter to Sister Angela, Mendoza again describes himself as her "most obedient, true and pious servant in Christ" and disingenuously professes, "I am giving up the slave-trade and will enter the yerba maté trade instead" (p. 40). In behaviour described on the next six pages, however, he continues to lie, kills more Guaraní, recruits *conquistadores*, slays his leader Tiberio in a duel, and assumes command of the group of slave hunters who work for Don Cabeza.

Effectively severing his ties with the accommodating church, Mendoza advocates capturing Guaraní illegally in Spanish colonial territory, thus taking another step towards the confrontation with the Jesuit missionaries. Then, in 1730 at age nineteen,

he kills two European men in duels fought on a street in Asunción. Bolt succinctly describes his emotional reaction by taking Mendoza down three steps from self-condemnation to self-justification: "Wrapping himself in his cloak that night, he thought first, 'I am a murderer.' And then, 'So be it.' And finally, 'That thrust with the baselard, it is good.' He settled himself and yawned and went to sleep. He slept as a man without hope" (p. 39).

In the wake of this voyage into a hellish, violent exploitation of the indigenous population, Mendoza's subsequent expeditions, profiteering, dishonesty, and acquisition of property are virtually anticlimactic and need not occupy us here. Bolt merely describes how Mendoza, as a particularly vivid example of imperialistic subjugation, becomes part of the colonial economic structure. At the same time, however, he continues to support his young brother. This is not merely an act of altruism but also a defence against his isolation in colonial society. "Felipe was safe now. Nothing else mattered to him", writes Bolt. "Where else was he to place his burden of love?" (p. 45) What is particularly significant in this regard, is the highlighted hypocrisy of his relationship to his fellow colonists in Asunción.

The arrival of eleven-year-old Felipe in South America in about 1733 underscores his older brother's moral depletion as well as the church's partial loss of its prophetic voice on that continent. Sister Angela writes to Rodrigo Mendoza that he should place his brother into a religious school in Montevideo and concludes her letter with "shrewd comments about his soul". The illiterate *conquistador* ignores these admonitions; "he would have nothing to do with his soul" (pp. 50-51). Instead, still caring about Felipe's welfare and interested in the boy's socialisation, he sails to Montevideo to inspect the Hospital of the Passion and learns that it is not really an orphanage. The unidentified "Brotherhood" in charge of that institution "had fallen away from its original aims and now served the interests of the *hidalgos*". The administrators initially react negatively to Mendoza, "but when he produced the thirty dineros their manner changed" (p. 51). Mendoza himself becomes something of an *hidalgo* by renting a modest house in "the aristocratic quarter of Asunción" and purchasing a smallholding near that city (p. 52). When he brings Felipe to Asunción, the youth wonders why only he and not his older brother receives social invitations. Felipe asks Rodrigo whether this is because Rodrigo concedes that "perhaps" this ostracism can be attributed to his occupation (pp. 56-57). Bolt

leaves no doubt that the townspeople have merely superficial respect for while actually fearing this *conquistador*: “He was a man to be treated with the utmost politeness, one whom the townsfolk turned down alleyways to avoid if they saw him coming or, if it was too late for that, treated with punctilious civility” (p. 57).

Bolt resumes his treatment of Mendoza after describing Gabriel O’Donnell’s years in Ireland and the initial penetration of the Jesuits above the Iguacu Falls. In another scene not in the film, Father Ribero complains to Don Cabeza at the latter’s home about the taking of slaves in the mission territory and names Mendoza in this context. Mendoza enters the room and denies culpability, professing that he deals only in legal *encomienda*. Ribero produces the Spanish royal charter that granted the Society of Jesus the mission territory and insists that Mendoza remain out of it. Don Cabeza threatens to have the charter changed but after Ribero departs angrily directs Mendoza to respect its terms. Mendoza has no intention of abandoning his lucrative source of income, however, especially since acquiring real estate. Still in the home of Don Cabeza, “he lifted his feet on to the shiny table, crossed one leg over the other and clasped his hands behind his head. He was smiling” (p. 107).

The tragic fraternal rivalry over Carlota gives Bolt another opportunity to expand on Rodrigo Mendoza’s inner moral crisis in a way not dealt with in the film. Injecting new literary elements into his text when describing the elder brother’s emotional state during the Guaraní feast of the Madonna, Bolt describes how he looked at Carlota with a face “like the half-hidden grotesques at San Miguel” and was “grinning like a wolf” (p. 128). Physical manifestations of his inner turmoil become even more apparent as the tension mounts. Mendoza storms out of Asunción into the countryside, where “after a time dust clogged his pores, covering him with white powder”. Thinking about the intimacy between Felipe and Carlota, he also feels “inwardly dirty” as “his hatred was turned equally upon the guilty pair and the world at large”. Rodrigo goes to his farm, and turns his tenants out of bed. “Do you see how white his face is, and the bloodstains?” the farmer asks his wife (p. 129). Thus described as a man almost deranged by rage, it is not surprising that Rodrigo spits into Felipe’s face and kills him even more quickly than in the film.

When Father Gabriel initially encounters Mendoza near San Carlos, the latter is a thoroughly hardened slaver who evinces no concern about moral principles,

missionaries, or the fate of his captives. He merely warns the Irish priest that he is armed and professes ignorance about the number of Guaraní he has taken (p. 102). Returning to Asunción, Mendoza meets Father Ribero by coincidence at the home of Don Cabeza and responds with indifference and asserted ignorance to that cleric's inquiries about the fate of captive Guaraní. When Father Gabriel confronts Mendoza, the latter is despondent and discusses only reluctantly his spiritual state. As indicated in the Plot Summary, the two talk briefly about the difference between regret and remorse. Mendoza is uncertain about his own relationship to sin. When Father Gabriel confronts him with his own sword, Mendoza simply mutters, "I don't need your forgiveness". The priest prods him to take the weapon. Reluctantly, Mendoza does so and begins to comprehend the depth of his depravity. ". . . he was aware of a surge of irresistible power in his arm and shoulder, and knew that when he had driven that heavy blade into his brother, in and up, what he had felt was joy". When Father Gabriel asks him how he reacts to this, Mendoza answers, "Then I am damned. . . . I feel no remorse" (pp. 147-148).

Nevertheless, Mendoza agrees to the penance that Father Gabriel then proposes. His dogged persistence in carrying out this expiation suggests both the keenness of his awareness of his depravity and his desire to rid himself of the emotional and spiritual burden that he has placed upon himself. The plan nearly backfires; Mendoza seems to believe that his salvation lies in the penance itself, which he is determined to follow through to the point of suicide, rather than using penance as a means to opening oneself to God's merciful grace. Father Gabriel's perception of this sheds additional light on Mendoza's underlying personality. "He would never seek to palliate his guilt, or weep, or turn to the Church for mercy. Realizing this now, Gabriel saw the error he had made in entering Mendoza in such a contest", writes Bolt. "He had underestimated the man's strength. He had overestimated the coercive power of hardship. He saw now that Mendoza was ready to force himself to breaking point. Death was what he sought" (p. 154). Bolt explores Mendoza's penance, Father Gabriel's guidance of the same, and the reactions of the other Jesuits to it in considerably greater detail in the novelisation than these phenomena are touched on in the film.

In both media, the penance ends appropriately when Hacugh severs the burden of weaponry that Mendoza has been dragging. In the novelisation one does not

find this to be a direct act of forgiveness, however. Nevertheless, the penitent is visibly relieved, although he does not weep as in the film: "Then his body too began to emit a sound that might have been sobbing but was indeed laughter" (p. 158).

In the novelisation Mendoza's spiritual rebirth following his penance occurs much more gradually. Slowly he enters into the world of the Guaraní and finds contentedness amongst them. Their harmony with nature and communal joy contribute to his own spiritual and emotional well-being. Bolt implicitly contrasts Mendoza's previous life of violence and rugged manliness by describing how he now participates in weaving, a task that his young companion, Babuie, informs him "is not man's work". Mendoza replies, "I know, but I am not a man" (p. 162). In another incident unique to the novelisation, Bolt underscores Mendoza's break with his past by relating how he refuses to have intercourse with a girl in connection with his rite of initiation into the tribe (p. 163). In discussing with Father Sebastian his adoption by the Guaraní, Mendoza admits that he does not comprehend its significance. That priest informs him that it is a sign of acceptance. "Can you not now, through Christ, accept yourself?" he asks. Mendoza replies, "It is not in my power" (p. 163). At some subsequent point that is obliquely defined as "one day", Mendoza debates religious matters with Tanretopra and declares himself to be a Christian. When the shaman challenges him and asserts that "the Devil is your god", Mendoza gives a reply that indicates the ambiguousness of his spirituality at this stage: "That may be so, but still the only God is Christ" (p. 164). Yet Mendoza refuses to participate in the sacrament of communion, unable to believe that God has forgiven him. Father Gabriel's assurances to the contrary are insufficient in themselves to convince him. Needing something utterly tangible, Mendoza persuades himself that the only credible sign of divine forgiveness will be acceptance into the Society of Jesus. This belief, Bolt stresses, is not entirely selfless, but linked to Mendoza's need for the security that life at San Carlos provides him. In this context, the illiterate Mendoza takes the initiative of praying and reciting from memory part of the Pauline prose-poem about love in I Corinthians 13 (pp. 165-166). In the film, by contrast, Father Gabriel urges him to read the Bible. Acceptance into the Jesuit order suffices to convince Mendoza that divine forgiveness is his, and as a sign of this he participates in communion at San Carlos (p. 167).

Bolt reinforces both the social communion that Mendoza enjoys with the Guaraní and his value to the mission in the conversation he narrates between the penitent novice and Father Antonio, the considerably more seasoned Jesuit who initially cannot accept the sincerity of Mendoza's conversation, at San Carlos. The latter's only role in the novelisation is to call attention to the depth of Mendoza's conversion. Antonio finds it strange that Mendoza should be assisting indigenes there with their "minor difficulties" and suggests that they should be discussing them with Father Gabriel instead. Mendoza replies that "they talk to me to prepare themselves to go to him, because they would rather start by talking to an equal". Antonio protests that the Guaraní are hardly Mendoza's equals, to which Mendoza answers modestly, "I hope I am their equal". Antonio reconsiders and allows that "we are all their equals in the eyes of the Lord". "But also in the eyes of men I am their equal", Mendoza protests. "That is why they can talk to me of the sort of thing that happens to ordinary men" (p. 203). After their next conversation, Antonio reports to Father Gabriel, "I really and truly think we have some sort of saint among us" (p. 204).

Yet, as Bolt emphasises, Mendoza's saintliness, indeed, his faith, is fragile and has its limits. His reluctance to go to Asunción and participate in Altamirano's hearing there illustrates this. "You don't believe you have been forgiven for the death of Felipe?" Father Gabriel asks him obliquely. Mendoza's reply demonstrates the subjectivity of his forgiveness: "As long as I am here, I feel forgiven. That is why I do not wish to leave" (p. 206). His behaviour at the hearing itself suggests his imperfection and evinces the impetuosity that would make his eventual choice of returning to violence as a means of attempting to resist the closure of the missions. Don Cabeza insists that the system of *encomienda* is conducted "in strict accordance with the laws of Spain and the precepts of the Church" (p. 237). Mendoza's reaction is more restrained in the novelisation than in the film. Bolt writes that "the scar-faced Jesuit raised his face, looked across at them both, and quietly said, 'That is a lie.'" (p. 238) Mendoza's insincere apology is expressed in language entirely implausible for a marginally literate man: "Humbly and without reservation, I ask you to pardon my presumption and my insolence. . . . Which makes my insolence doubly impertinent, and your pardon doubly courteous" (pp. 243-244). Moreover, against the background of Mendoza's history of dishonesty these words seem particularly

hypocritical. The episode sets up his ultimate decision to leave the road of peace in favour of the warpath.

Nevertheless, Mendoza remains a puzzling, ambivalent character nearly until the end. He accompanies Altamirano's inspection party to San Miguel and San Carlos and, *en route*, serves both the papal emissary and Father Gabriel (pp. 260-261). He continues to acknowledge his debt of gratitude, though expressing it more narrowly than one might expect when the future of the Society of Jesus hung in the balance. When Altamirano asks him about his penance and comments that he must have been enormously strong, Mendoza replies that he had been strong but had been rescued by Hacugh (p. 261). Inexplicably, he does not mention Father Gabriel in this context.

When Mendoza ponders the defence of San Carlos, he reveals how low the ceiling is above his Christian sophistication. He remembers part of the Pauline "armour of God" metaphor in Ephesians 6 but fails to go beyond vv. 10-12 and therefore does not realise that he is exhorted to use spiritual weapons. Mendoza responds by accepting his old sword that his young Guaraní companion Babuie extends to him. Morally, his behavioural pendulum has swung far back towards the familiar pole of violence, and he recognises that he no longer is the pious penitent of the past two years. As Mendoza goes off to fight the Portuguese-Spanish expeditionary force, he admits to Hacugh, "My ways are not the ways of Christ. If you want the ways of Christ, go to Father Gabriel" (p. 274). Mendoza nevertheless asks Father Gabriel to bless him shortly thereafter, another contradiction which on the novice's sparse words shed virtually no additional light. He kills many Spanish soldiers with his home-made cannon but dies while running towards Gaspacho in a scene that Bolt explicitly ties to his earlier life: "Mendoza drew his sword and rushed at him, but he fled to the other side, where Mendoza was met by the Spanish musketeers. He attacked them fiendishly, as in his old conquistador days. It was then that the Spanish commander, astounded, drew his pistol and shot him" (p. 282). In completing this cycle, Mendoza thus dies as he had lived before his rebirth.

Father Gabriel As a Complex Defender of the Oppressed

If the Father Gabriel of the film is a one-dimensional and almost incredibly saintly figure who emerges from the outback of Paraguay and is virtually incapable of uttering a harsh word or deviating from his ideals, his counterpart in the novelisation is a decidedly more complex and realistic person who combines a moderate level of idealism with occasional irascibility, Irish wit, obstinacy, and other attributes that add relief to his personality and make his faith appear strong but certainly vulnerable. This character emerges as immeasurably more genuinely Boltian, and because of this the ethical dilemmas he faces become more plausible.

Bolt limns the basic contours of his temperament when describing Gabriel O'Donnell's childhood and early years in the priesthood in Ireland. That the situation in which Irish Roman Catholic priests found themselves during the first half of the eighteenth century approximately paralleled that which Gabriel and his Jesuit colleagues would have to endure in parts of Latin America becomes a central theme. The future missionary grows up in an environment of religious oppression in which his own pastor ministered illegally to his large flock. Gabriel "knew the kind of life that Seamus lived, always looking over his shoulder in case somebody had given the word that would set the constable after him, for English law said the priests had no right to be there" (pp. 64-65). Physical hardship is an inevitable consequence for this priest, whose sacramental rôle is appreciated, "but everyone also knew how he lived alone in his draughty cottage, never knowing where his next meal might be coming from" (p. 65). Despite enduring economic deprivation, Gabriel is a talented youth, whose scholarly prowess and musical aptitude impress his priest. Gradually Gabriel yields to this cleric's urging to follow in his footsteps. The gifted lad endures loneliness and is vaguely prescient: "There were times when, alone, playing his whistle over the sad land, he felt that he was already a marked man" (p. 67).

Between Gabriel's youth in Ireland and the beginning of his years of service as a priest there, Bolt briefly narrates the course of his studies in France and Rome. This period also prepares him and shapes his personality in specific ways that have a bearing on his place amongst the Guaraní. He acquires a mastery of the oboe

and the flute, instruments that would help him reach indigenous peoples in South America. Gabriel observes the sexual licentiousness of some members of the Society of Jesus, especially in the Eternal City, but upholds his vow of celibacy. He becomes versed in theology, philosophy, and other subjects but at the end of his studies, Bolt stresses, "he had somehow still emerged with the mind of a peasant" (p. 69).

His affinity with the poor firmly intact, Gabriel returns to his native land, though now to Mamegoff in Tipperary as an assistant to a priest. A Protestant named Mr. Edwardes owns one-half of that county while most of its residents, many of whom are Gabriel's parishioners, live in abject poverty. The parallel with the colonial situation in Latin America is too obvious for Bolt to state it explicitly. Father Gabriel's ministry in these circumstances is partly prophetic, more so than would be the case in Paraguay, and he aims his rhetorical missiles at the rapacious Protestant landlords in the midst of his flock. During Advent, "he did not scruple to warn them that their mansions were built on foundations of sand, because their brothers and sisters were starving around them in hovels. He also informed them that their silks and velvets had been torn from backs which they could catch sight of by looking out of their fine windows or into their own servants quarters" (p. 73). Reiterating the point of intrepid defence of the poor, Bolt declares, "But when any wrong came to his notice, Gabriel could not let anyone who had power to right it rest easy, and the sight of him trudging up to their doorways became so wearisome to the Martins, the Howarths and the Greensides that the time came when they informed their servants (who were Catholics) that they were no longer at home to the priest" (p. 75). Always fearless, Father Gabriel does not emerge as particularly affable while in Ireland, at least from the perspective of the power-brokers there, and he refuses to become beholden to them. On occasion wealthy Anglicans heed the pleading of their rector and give their Catholic cottagers additional funds. In their own eyes, this is an example of largesse; "Gabriel, however, had received their charity ungraciously, they all agreed" (p. 74). He can also be censorious and unforgiving, and his ecclesiastical views do not extend beyond the Roman Catholic Church. He upbraids a young parishioner, Charles O'Burke, for converting to the Church of England, accusing him of rejecting Christianity entirely (p. 76).

During his imprisonment at Glenmarie, Father Gabriel's faith undergoes a severe test, and he emerges from it a more seasoned priest. Bolt describes the ordeal in

some detail. Placed on the same level of misery as his fellow prisoners, Gabriel witnesses their inhumanity, indeed, brutality to each other. "The realization that humanity could sink to such degradation shook his belief in the possibility of redemption" (p. 81), observes Bolt without probing further the limits of Gabriel's concept of justification. Gabriel himself is beaten by officials at the prison, and some of his fellow prisoners resent his attempts to minister to them. "These were the blackest days he ever knew", relates Bolt. "Gradually he discontinued the practice of prayer. He put his Bible aside somewhere; when he looked for it, he found that it had disappeared. He did not care" (p. 82). The vision of Christ in a dream restores Father Gabriel's faith, however, and he regains some acceptance after being beaten for interfering with corporal punishment inflicted on a frail, old fellow prisoner (p. 83). Eventually O' Burke agrees to pardon Gabriel on the condition that he accept perpetual banishment from Ireland. The expatriate priest returns to Rome and agrees to take an assignment anywhere in the world (p. 85).

Bolt's careful portrait of Gabriel's personality development and clerical career ends in the Old World. After Gabriel reaches the Jesuit mission field in Paraguay, we learn within the course of a few lines that he rises meteorically there, gains respect as a "model priest" and accepting more responsibility, eventually becomes head of the San Miguel mission. The only additional clues Bolt gives about him at this stage of his ministry underscore the complexity and plausible imperfection of his behaviour and personality. "Even his bouts of temper were welcome to his subordinates", we learn about this missionary priest who differs markedly from his counterpart in the film. "They loved him too much to wish him to be perfect, although they believed he walked with Christ" (p. 86). One highlighted imperfection that sets him apart from the Gabriel of the film is his surprising inability to interact beneficially and communicate effectively and naturally with young Guaraní. In one incident at San Miguel, Gabriel "caught sight of a frieze of little brown faces watching him from the veranda. He cleared his throat, put on a pedagogic air and pushed his way out through them, for, in fact, he had no idea how to treat children" (p. 140).

Father Gabriel's behaviour towards Rodrigo Mendoza reflects the credibility and complexity of the former's personality. When Carlota approaches him in Asunción and pleads with him to speak with Mendoza, he reacts in an unpastoral

way: "Well, I can't help him. Forgive me. I loathe him. Tell him so" (p. 144). Accentuating the point, when Carlota adds that Mendoza is lying in the Jesuit hospice, he responds entirely uncharitably: "Then let him be cast out, so that another can take his place" (p. 145). Father Gabriel relents only after she suggests that Mendoza might wish to speak with him about Guaraní captured above the Iguazu Falls (p. 145). We have already treated in our discussion of Mendoza's spiritual path the initial encounter between the two men and Gabriel's guidance of the pivotal penance in this.

It must be emphasised that unlike his colleague Antonio and despite his initial scepticism in Asunción, Father Gabriel fully accepts the sincerity of Mendoza's conversion experience. When the erstwhile *conquistador* refuses to commune because he cannot believe that God has forgiven him for his sin of fratricide, Gabriel insists that this belief is mistaken. "I who have watched you say that Christ has forgiven you. I beg you to consider that" (p. 165). Yet he is "incensed" when Mendoza attempts to negotiate by informing him that "if Christ accepts me as a lay brother, I shall know that he accepts me at the Mass" (p. 166).

Subsequent events at San Carlos and in Asunción shed small quanta of additional light on Father Gabriel, his understanding of missions, and the implications of his personality for his ethics. When Antonio and Mendoza discuss the reactions of the Guaraní to the Jesuits in their midst, Antonio asks how these indigenes perceive Gabriel. "A man who has Christ inside him but does not realize it" (p. 204), Mendoza replies with implausible sophistication. The point that Bolt is apparently trying to emphasise here, and it certainly does not emerge in the film, is that Father Gabriel's inner piety does not come to appreciable expression amongst the people whom he is evangelising. This harmonises with what has already been said about his inability to communicate effectively with Guaraní children. What remains unclear, however, is how this spiritual introversion, if that it may be called, relates to Gabriel's ultimate decision to eschew violence as a means of attempting to prevent the closure of his order's missions.

At Altamirano's hearing in Asunción, Father Gabriel proves himself to be a competent and rhetorically nimble advocate for the missions and the people whom they serve. As indicated earlier, he turns around the charge that the Guaraní are given to drink by emphasising that Spanish colonists in general and Don Cabeza

in particular were in no position to cast the first stone. Gabriel also argues for cultural fairness, arguing *inter alia* that it is unfair and irrelevant to gauge the humanity of the Guaraní by European standards and, for example, expect them to have the same competence in or use of mathematics that colonists had in their own economy. Interestingly enough, he tips his hand and reveals his own cultural captivity by assuring Altamirano and the others present at the hearing that the Guaraní “acknowledge Europe’s natural superiority - even in using their own local materials, for example, to erect buildings they could never dream of for themselves” (p. 230). Gabriel also explains at length the significance of the missions as safe havens from slave traders based in both Spanish and Portuguese territory (pp. 230-232).

Bolt also underscores Father Gabriel’s idealism at this stage. When Altamirano asks him *in camera* what he believes is at stake in the question of bowing to political pressure and closing the missions, he replies, “The work of Christ” (p. 242). Altamirano responds to this pious utterance by thinking, “The man must be a simpleton unless he is some sort of saint” (p. 242). The contrast between the idealistic side of Gabriel’s complicated personality and Altamirano’s ecclesiastical-political pragmatism reaches its pinnacle in this dialogue and, to a much greater degree than the former’s more cynical quips, prepares the reader for his ultimate decision to remain at San Carlos.

We learn still more about Father Gabriel when he takes Altamirano to that new mission, particularly with regard to the former’s commitment to his vocation and his devotion to the Guaraní. An early clue is that as the party paddles along the river more deeply into the jungle, Gabriel becomes happier and more tranquilly energised than in relatively hectic Asunción. After Altamirano announces his decision that the Guaraní must leave San Carlos, Father Gabriel crosses verbal swords with him, accusing the papal emissary of failing the Guaraní by refusing “to fight on their behalf” (p. 266). The disharmonious priorities of the two men come to the fore when they debate the consequences of closure of the missions. To the erstwhile Jesuit Altamirano, the threatened suppression of the Society of Jesus is the worst imaginable scenario. To Gabriel, however, its possible passing from the scene of ecclesiastical history would be “grievous” but less so than “the work of the Devil”, which he obliquely accuses Altamirano of abetting by abandoning the Guaraní (p. 267).

The penultimate verbal exchange between Father Gabriel and Mendoza unfolds in the novelisation largely as in the film, although with an amplified dialogue, and need not be described in detail here. In print, however, the former remains less saintly than on the screen at this critical juncture. Furthermore, Gabriel's admixture of loyalties to the Society of Jesus and the Guaraní is still intact, as is his commitment to the New Testament emphasis on God as love. After his last encounter with Altamirano, he enters his cell to find Mendoza there and growls at him, "What do *you* want?" Upon hearing his question about the consequences of breaking his vow of obedience (in this case with regard to Altamirano's insistence that the Jesuits at San Carlos return with him immediately to Asunción), Gabriel orders him out. When Mendoza protests that one purpose of the mission was to protect the Guaraní, Gabriel replies hoarsely, "If you die with new blood on your hands, you will die a traitor. You swore to give your life to God, and God is love" (pp. 268-269). In a later incident, his last conversation with Mendoza, he refuses to bless the former *conquistador* who has again taken up the sword arguing, in words almost identical to those he utters in the film, that "if might is right, love has nothing to do in the world" (pp. 278-279).

Gabriel tries to implement a measure of these conflicting loyalties (apart from obeying Altamirano and returning to Asunción) in the proposal he makes to Hacugh as the Portuguese and Spanish soldiers approach that they relocate the mission deep in the jungle. The Guaraní chief rejects this and, convinced that God has abandoned his people, insists that they will remain at San Carlos and resist militarily (p. 270). Gabriel's part in the final scenes of the devastation of that mission is essentially sacerdotal, as he celebrates Mass and, bearing the ciborium (which Bolt does not describe and whose symbolism he does not explain) leads the congregation out of the burning chapel (pp. 280-281). A sergeant major shoots Father Gabriel because he allegedly "made the Garden of Eden in his mission" (p. 282). Bolt does not elaborate on this loose thread in his narrative, nor does he comment on the significance of Gabriel's last words - or thoughts, we are not told whether he actually utters them: "Father, forgive me" and, after seeing the face of the dying Mendoza, "My son" (p. 282). A hint of enigmatic ambiguity thus accompanies Father Gabriel out of his troubled life in this world.

The Distressed Soul of Luis Altamirano

The rôle of the papal emissary Luis Altamirano is just as great in Bolt's novelisation as in the film, although it differs in three principal respects in these two media. On the screen he is the narrator; his commentary brackets the plot, appearing at the beginning and end of the action and interspersed at various points in it. In the novelisation Bolt takes the position of a conventional omniscient narrator, thus removing Altamirano from this task.

To a significantly lesser degree than in his portrayals of Rodrigo Mendoza and Gabriel O'Donnell, Bolt relates details of Altamirano's early life. What he presents of this priest's biography is not merely quantitatively meagre but also less specific and qualitatively different with regard to the ethical and spiritual crises he faces in South America. The last point is especially important, because it helps to establish the disharmony in Altamirano's and Father Gabriel's reactions to the political - and attendant ethical - dilemmas which the Jesuit missions face.

We get only the vaguest hints of Altamirano's early years. Bolt tells us that on one occasion while travelling along a river in South America *en route* to Asunción the papal emissary remembers his "Italian boyhood in a villa by a narrower stream under a more opalescent sky" (p. 209) but relates little else about this phase of his life apart from indicating how the youth decided to enter the priesthood. On the family's annual stays in the country, "his father used to call the village priest in to teach him the elements of the doctrine of the church". When this took place is not stated. This "pious simpleton" had a penchant for telling Bible stories that held young Altamirano's attention. Mourning the death of his aestival priest and teacher, the youth informed his father of his own desire to take Holy Orders. This decision did not have familial support; his father assumed that he would outgrow it, and when the son did not, "paid a visit to a relative who was a bishop. He returned favourably impressed" (pp. 210-211). With his vocation rooted in cynicism, Altamirano soon loses his spiritual moorings. Entry into the Society of Jesus administers a fatal blow to his idealism and spirit of altruism: "His own admiration for artless love did not survive the education he received at a Jesuit college. His original resolve was lost there, but his personal resolution grew" (p. 211).

Altamirano's career track is equally obscure, possibly owing to the shape of Bolt's research. Somehow Altamirano has risen to lofty heights in both the Society of Jesus and the Vatican. At the time of his entry into the plot of *The Mission* in the early 1750s, "he stood as high in the inner councils of the Pope as in those of the General of his Order" (p. 172). Altamirano's moral development, however, has not soared to a corresponding altitude. Bolt writes obliquely that "the preferred indulgence of this priest, despite his almost venerable years, was dalliance" (p. 184). More devastating to the church whose administration he serves, however, "he was not above taking a bribe". Fraudulent conduct could reach major proportions and have grave consequences for the Jesuit missionary endeavour, because "this corrupt priest was not only the trusted agent of his General, but also privy to the inner councils of the Holy Father, so he must know which way the wind was blowing and could be relied upon to reach the conclusion he was being sent across the ocean to arrive at" (pp. 184-185).

Bolt employs Altamirano's propensity for illicit sexual intercourse, and concomitant inability to respect his priestly vows consistently, as an unmistakable sign of his moral deficiency and links this to both the supposedly politically independent papal emissary's being beholden to the courts of Europe and to his lack of faith in simple religious answers to ethical questions. When Altamirano discusses the Jesuit missions with Carvalho in Lisbon, his mind turns to "the girl awaiting him at his lodging", knowing that Carvalho is aware of her presence there (pp. 186, 194). After difficult and dispiriting negotiations, he looks forward to "temporary solace in the arms of a woman who doubtless deserved a less venerable companion - more supple, less subtle - but who would still find the ageing man who had engaged her for the evening could enjoy himself" (p. 196). Sexual impropriety has plagued Altamirano for decades and eroded his personal piety. "Altamirano had no faith in the simple cures of the spirit", Bolt admits. "Some twenty years ago he had tried treating the sins of the flesh he had no trouble in acknowledging with prayer. The attempt had been in Rome, and he remembered the unresponsive silence in the vault above him when his experiment had ended". Altamirano is entirely conscious of his hypocrisy, thinking that "if critics of the Order wanted suitable targets, his case would suit their book" (p. 196).

Altamirano's moral deficiency and spiritual debility do not prevent him from being a crafty negotiator who readily sacrifices ethical principles on the altar of expediency. This "alert Jesuit" (p. 185) proves virtually impossible for Carvalho to pin down to a commitment to recommend closure of the missions before crossing the Atlantic and takes pleasure in knowing that "the question he had just avoided was the only one which really interested either of them" (pp. 188-189). In a similar vein in the same conversation, when Carvalho tries to evoke an answer by asking him where in Europe the Jesuit missionaries would be sent if they were withdrawn from South America, Altamirano responds by holding his glass up to the candelabrum and inquiring about the provenance of the wine (p. 192).

Bolt highlights the contours of the dilemma in Altamirano's mind during this confrontation with Carvalho. This shrewd representative of the Vatican indicates that he has "two turns of mind" and that his "theological turn" pulls him towards recommending exemption of the Jesuit missions from the transferral to Portuguese hegemony. On the other hand, Altamirano gives equal rhetorical weight to his "distinctly practical" side when describing his predicament, insisting that in Asunción he will listen to both theologically and practically minded people before making his decision. When Carvalho seeks to sway him by declaring his opinion that the Society of Jesus "is too much involved in secular pursuits - even in state affairs sometimes", Altamirano states that he cannot share that sentiment (pp. 191-193). Immediately thereafter, however, he offers Carvalho a morsel of hope by announcing with a smile that "you can rely on me to judge ecclesiastically, not Jesuitically" (p. 194). Bolt thereby establishes yet another key element of dramatic tension on which much of the remainder of the novelisation, even more explicitly than the film, relies.

Bolt's Altamirano is also a man of his age and social class. During his negotiations with Carvalho, he finds the "total lack of social activity in Lisbon as early as midnight" distressing (p. 185), although he takes pleasure in dining privately on "a moderate meal of figs, white wine and duck" at the Portuguese royal court (p. 196). Upon arriving in Asunción after a demanding transatlantic voyage and journey up the Paraná River, Altamirano resides not with the Jesuits or other Roman Catholic religious personnel, but at the mansion of "rude" but "gorgeously dressed" Don Cabeza, where he himself displays his sartorial splendour by wearing "an elegant

buff coat” and “an admirable waistcoat and fine cambric shirt” (pp. 211-212). Altamirano shows his host and Hontar “an elegantly bound volume” he has brought from Europe, an unspecified work by Voltaire. When Don Cabeza notes the “nymph, surrounded by admiring animals” on its cover, his distinguished ecclesiastical guest declares, “A priest must be able to recognize evil” (p. 213).

Notwithstanding his general captivity in European civilisation of the Enlightenment, Altamirano is impressed by the piety of the Guaraní Christians in Asunción (p. 209). This nascent respect accentuates his moral dilemma. He is also stirred by the careful treatment Don Cabeza’s servants give his furniture, explicitly comparing this favourably to the way in which a Spanish colonial overseer treats it (p. 215). The choral and instrumental skills of Guaraní musicians in that city also move this cultivated visitor (p. 219). During the hearing he conducts in Asunción, Altamirano is momentarily transformed by the beauty of a Palestrina solo sung by a Guaraní youth (pp. 220-221). When he inspects San Miguel, he takes note of the “neatly ordered stone huts” and finds the *Te Deum* sung in the chapel familiar (pp. 247-248). Surveying the agricultural areas of the *reducción*, Altamirano says to Hontar, “I find this place impressive, don’t you?” (p. 249) and reacts with disgust when Mendoza shows him the scarred back of a former slave who now resides at San Miguel (p. 250). On the other hand, he eventually finds the mass demonstrations of piety excessive and irritating (p. 250).

In discussing Altamirano’s decision-making process in the novelisation, Bolt makes a highly significant departure from the plot of the film. He reveals that Altamirano has already made up his mind before the hearing opens. His dilemma, we learn, is now one of diplomacy, not of decision. Bolt quotes Altamirano’s thoughts on the eve of the hearing: “My life, as I see now, has involved much sacrifice of this kind, and those brothers I met when I landed must sacrifice the simple, skilful people they have brought to Christ. They must do it for the sake of the Order to which they belong and to which they have sworn obedience, but how am I to tell them?” (p. 218)

The hearing itself is thus anticlimactic. Much of it is similar to that depicted in the film, though in greater detail. A significant departure occurs when Father Gabriel speaks about the mission territory. In contrast to the surprise he evinces upon learning that the area above the Iguazu Falls has been transferred from Spanish

to Portuguese hegemony, he here knows about the change of the colonial border under the terms of the Treaty of Madrid (p. 225). This is less dramatic but more plausible than the stunning revelation depicted in the film. A less momentous if immeasurably more humorous addition to the filmscript is an exchange concerning the Guarani's alleged immoderate consumption of alcoholic beverages. After a "hard-faced" female colonist in the audience cries out that far from being spiritual "the natives are perpetually drunk", Father Gabriel seeks to turn back this charge with an *argumentum ad hominem* levelled at Don Cabeza: "I have also heard that the Captain-General goes to the trouble of sending all the way to Europe to stock his excellent cellar with wine which must surely have the same effect on those who drink it as the liquor that the Guarani brew has on them" (p. 228).

The provocative incident in which Mendoza calls Don Cabeza a liar during the hearing gives Bolt an opportunity to cast additional light on Altamirano. During the ensuing discussions behind the scenes, the crafty papal legate finds Father Gabriel's uncompromising faith and zeal unsettling. When the priest from San Carlos defends Mendoza's outburst against Don Cabeza as an act that "Christ must have foreseen", Altamirano replies, "I wish to see no further sign of this enthusiasm" (p. 241). Discussing the purpose of his journey during the proceedings, he assures Don Cabeza that he "has been sent here by His Holiness the Pope to do a certain thing and he will do it, never fear, only provided we are prepared to help him. Patience is all I ask of you" (p. 243). This momentarily further erodes the dramatic tension that Bolt earlier has created in the previously cited conversation between Altamirano and Carvalho. Yet in a discussion with both Don Cabeza and Hontar, he declares that he is "less decided now than I was before I started out" and will therefore accept Father Gabriel's invitation to visit the missions (p. 245). Only a page later, however, Bolt reveals that Altamirano's decision to travel upriver to inspect San Miguel stems solely from a need "to make a gesture to suggest the missions' fate was not yet sealed" (p. 246).

This cornucopia of sensations and the realisation that his decision will have momentous consequences for the lives of many thousands of people at prosperous missions distress Altamirano, and their effect on him is visible. Speaking with Father Ribero, "He rubbed his face, and for the first time he felt cornered by his responsibilities" (p. 252). This foreshadows subsequent revelations of his spiritual infirmity.

Later at San Miguel Altamirano discusses the possible closure of the missions with Don Cabeza and insists, "I will obey my conscience". The papal emissary questions his ability to do so, however, and walking across the square thinks, "So, I am to consult my conscience! Conscience, are you there? My pride is there, certainly . . ." (p. 256). An unexpected confrontation with Father Gabriel and Mendoza derails his train of thought, but not before this critical issue of self-doubt has been raised.

Bolt marshals the power of nature and Altamirano's concomitant naked and impotent exposure to it as another means of exposing his spiritual weakness in facing his crisis. At San Miguel, he notices the trees "darkening fast" (p. 257), and proceeding upstream to San Carlos, "he saw the jungle closing in" and finds himself "staring into a predatory eye" that "belongs to a monstrous creature with the hard, unnatural skin of a fiend or dragon in a medieval painting: an alligator" (p. 260). Whereas in the film Altamirano refers to the countryside through which the river flows as a Garden of Eden, in the novelisation it is Father Gabriel who utters those words in a conversation with him (p. 262). For his part, Altamirano feels uncomfortable in this exotic environment. Bolt explains that "it was not the strangeness or the silence or the unexpectedness that alarmed Altamirano. It was the absence of anything within himself to set against these things, now that he had left familiar surroundings" (pp. 262-263). His faith, if that it may be called, is contingent on the trappings of civilisation. Immediately before arriving at San Carlos, he feels more secure when he hears "the opening strains of the *Spem in Alium*" (p. 263) emanating from a choir standing along and in the river. Altamirano recognises in these singers "a choir fit to grace Saint Peter's" (p. 263). The troubled cleric thereupon withdraws into the forest near the village to meditate, "but the separation was alarming" (p. 263). Nature simply overwhelms him in his solitude, reflecting the complexity of the dilemma from which he cannot escape. It is a profoundly existentialist crisis. "He had come away to seek strength and direction, but now stood, confused, in a grotesque world where the works of God and of the Devil seemed to grow in and out of each other" (pp. 264).

During his inspection of the missions, the increasingly troubled Altamirano seeks to wriggle out of his dilemma by arranging a compromise. In a conversation with Don Cabeza at San Miguel, Altamirano informs him that while he "cannot advise the transfer of the mission territories to Portuguese administration" he

recognises that such a move is mandated in the Treaty of Madrid and feels powerless to prevent that change of hegemony (p. 254). In a minor departure from the film, he suggests to Don Cabeza that the two of them recommend to the Spanish king and the pope, respectively, that the transfer be postponed until the continuation of the Jesuit missions is guaranteed. Don Cabeza, however, adamantly and hatefully hisses that “the work of the missions is the Devil’s work!” (p. 255)

Later at San Miguel Hontar hands Altamirano a letter from Carvalho in which this Portuguese leader threatens to expel the Society of Jesus from Portugal if Altamirano refuses to recommend closure of the Jesuit missions. (p. 257). This is stated unambiguously in the novelisation, whereas in the film it is unclear; Altamirano does not open the envelope but merely guesses its contents. In their conversation surrounding this incident, the two men agree that they have expected the Jesuits to compromise (pp. 257-258).

After trying briefly without success to pray at San Miguel (in contrast to the five-hour vigil depicted in the film), the beleaguered Altamirano accepts Father Gabriel’s invitation to visit San Carlos. *En route* the latter announces that his visitor is “about to see the Garden of Eden” (p. 262). The potential depth of this Pentateuchal allusion is never reached, however, and readers receive relatively little insight into how either Father Gabriel or his colleagues perceive the remote station and its environs, other than as a bridgehead for the expansion of Christianity and a sanctuary from slavers. These themes are obviously crucial, but they leave unanswered the question to what extent the quality of San Carlos is a human contrivance as opposed to its inherent grandeur as an aboriginal part of divine Creation into which sin has crept in the form of colonialism in a highly destructive and exploitative form. Bolt describes the emissary’s visit to San Carlos quite briefly but emphasises one critical difference. In the novelisation, Altamirano summarily orders the Guaraní to quit the mission (p. 264); in the film he commands the Jesuits there to leave and accompany him back to Asunción. In his subsequent conversation with Father Gabriel before leaving San Carlos, Altamirano states that his reason for visiting San Carlos “was to teach the Captain-General [*i. e.* Don Cabeza] that he must never take the Church - take me, in fact - for granted” (p. 267). In the film, it will be recalled, Altamirano tells Father Gabriel that he has come to San Carlos only to convince the Jesuits there not to resist the transfer of the mission territory to

Portuguese hegemony. In both versions, in any case, his decision is a *fait accompli* before he reaches San Carlos.

A thoroughly tragic figure, Altamirano cannot possibly resolve his personal crisis. In the last few lines of the novelisation, the papal emissary upbraids Don Cabeza for ordering the massacre, as in the film, and Hontar declares, "You had no choice. You must work in the real world. And the real world is thus". Altamirano's reply to this rationalisation differs from what he says in the film: "Oh no. Thus have we made it" (p. 283). In the film, the papal emissary adds, "Thus have I made it", words that suggest the specific implication of the Roman Catholic hierarchy in creating and maintaining exploitation of indigenous peoples in South America.

The Collective Image of the Colonists

It must be stressed that the primary emphasis in Bolt's creation of characters is on individuals, no doubt owing to his preoccupation with their personal moral dilemmas. Nevertheless, ethnic groups also play significant rôles in this work. One such group comprises the Hispanic settlers with whom the key *personae* interact. The secular colonists in the novelisation, especially those whose personal or ancestral roots lie in Spain, are a thoroughly unsavoury lot whom Bolt employs as a negative referent and foil for set off the Jesuits, especially Father Gabriel O'Donnell, in even bolder relief. A few of them, especially Don Cabeza, Rodrigo Mendoza, and Carlota, emerge as individual characters with relatively detailed personalities. Most of the others, however, are merely types who collectively perform a functional service in Bolt's literary scheme without emerging as real people. We shall concentrate on the latter in the present section but pay little attention to the *conquistadores* amongst them, as much of Bolt's treatment of these soldiers of fortune has already been covered in the Plot Summary.

Rodrigo Mendoza begins to notice the disagreeable attributes of the Spanish colonists in Buenos Aires immediately after disembarking in Buenos Aires. "The Spanish citizens seemed half smothered", observes Bolt stereotypically. "Yawning, they began to make gestures which they lacked the energy to finish, as they sat

in the square in loose waistcoats and unbuckled pantaloons” (p. 9). When Mendoza accepts a temporary job on a barge, he discovers that its captain was “a dour old man who only grunted” when the young immigrant from Cádiz seeks to communicate with him (p. 10). Reaching Asunción, Mendoza experiences the exploitation to which we have referred in the Plot Summary. Most of the colonists in that city are no less stereotypical than their counterparts in Buenos Aires. In sharp contrast to their monotonous attire and behaviour, however, stand the first *conquistadors* whom Mendoza encounters. These disparate mercenaries stand out as an “exotic group of men dressed in an assortment of garments, rags and strange quilted pants. One, sporting grotesque finery, with soiled ruffles and an earth-stained embroidered coat, looked as though he had arrived from some dilapidated court” (p. 13).

Don Cabeza, the Captain-General in Asunción, emerges early as the epitome of colonial vices and exploitation. Bolt resorts to conventional techniques in describing this fourth-generation South American in utterly unappealing terms, his moral depravity reflected in his physical appearance: “He was fifty years old, fat and ungainly - particularly when, as now, he was without his wig - but still remarkably sure-footed on his short, thick legs” (p. 44). Later we learn about Don Cabeza’s hot temper and total lack of moral scruples as he manipulates the institution of *encomienda* for his own gain. More than any other single colonist, he serves as a foil to Father Gabriel and, ultimately, his erstwhile employee Rodrigo Mendoza. Don Cabeza also plays an instrumental part in dialogue with Altamirano both in Asunción and at San Miguel that parallels that of Carvalho in Lisbon.

Carlota’s arrival in Asunción gives Bolt another example to bring out negative attributes of the colonial populace by contrasting it with this noblewoman. At the bullfighting arena, she notices the “evil-smelling crowd” (p. 114), and when Mendoza enters the ring and slays a bull, he cuts off its ears and stares at the “rabble” watching the spectacle (p. 115). At the *fête champêtre* after that bloody event, the illiterate Mendoza assures Carlota, who seems beleaguered by overly observant colonists, that “this time there is no sport for the canaille” (p. 115). As indicated in the Plot Summary, when they go riding the Spanish colonial officers who participate in the hunt are uniformly inebriated.

Religious hypocrisy is another colonial attribute. We have already considered the willingness of the priest who hears Mendoza’s early confessions to compromise.

On a wider stage in Asunción, the festival of the Guaraní Madonna, notwithstanding its ethno-religious name, was “made for the occasion of a fancy-dress ball for those whose skins were white” (p. 127). The participants are at least as exotic as the indigenous population. At Don Cabeza’s mansion, “people bizarrely dressed as birds, jaguars, heroes of the ancient world and satyrs were uttering strange cries and mocking laughter”, while outside “a dwarf, swathed in a shock of brilliant green feathers, came right up to Mendoza’s bridle and grimaced obscenely, only to draw back at the sight of the rider’s face“ (p. 130). Don Cabeza himself is the height of religious hypocrisy. “Clearly this ruffian was not aware of being a hypocrite”, Altamirano concludes after his initial encounter with him. “He supposed himself to be devout” (p. 213).

The final major instalment of Bolt’s diatribe against the Spanish colonial population encompasses Altamirano’s hearing in Asunción. Bolt emphasises that those in attendance are not the *canaille*, but “*hidalgos* and their ladies” who arrive on horses or riding in carriages at the venue in the courtyard of Dan Cabeza’s mansion. They look forward with confidence to a decision for the closure of the missions and thus treat the occasion as “something of a festivity” (pp. 219-220). When the previously mentioned Guaraní youth sings beautifully a song by Palestrina, the Jesuits applaud while the “*hidalgos* and their womenfolk” remain silent (p. 221). The settlers applaud, however, when Don Cabeza refers to the Guaraní above the Iguacu Falls as “beasts”, and the women in the assembly feign indignation when Don Cabeza refers to the traditional nudity of these indigenes (p. 223). When Father Gabriel alludes to the Captain-General’s love of alcoholic beverages, “many of the *hidalgos* laughed, for Cabeza’s drinking was renowned” (p. 228).

The Ambivalent Image of the Guaraní

The Guaraní of the novelisation differ significantly from those of the film. Perhaps most notably, in the book Bolt is able to develop Hacugh and Tanretopra to some degree as individual characters, although they lack the detailed personalities and background of the European principals. Yet the group in general emerges as essentially different in Bolt’s text, lacking the noble savage aura that hangs over

its counterparts on the screen. This adds yet another dimension of realism and depth to the novelisation.

In contrast to the film, one does not find insouciant Guaraní frolicking in the river in this book. Indeed, the overall presentation of them is of a relatively unappealing people in their own right, and on whom European colonialism has made a devastating impact, though one tempered by Jesuit concern for their welfare. It must be emphasised that Bolt does not attempt to open a window on Guaraní life before the advent of Spanish and Portuguese hegemony. We see the Guaraní almost exclusively in their interaction with their oppressors.

The initial confrontation with these indigenes occurs shortly after Rodrigo Mendoza arrives in Asunción and finds employment on a barge. The Guaraní crew members on that vessel “were sunk in lethargy” (p. 10). The young immigrant hastily concludes that “they are stupid”, a judgement with which the captain summarily concurs (p. 11). Encamped along the river that evening, the indigenous servants serve their Spanish employers supper (p. 11). Bolt indicates at this early stage that the Guaraní wish to escape. When the barge passes through a forest, they “exchanged guttural words in an undertone, but then they saw Mendoza looking and resumed their blank expressions” (p. 11).

Bolt does not gloss over the violence in the initial reaction of the Guaraní above the Iguacu Falls to Jesuit efforts to evangelise them. He portrays them as exotic, cannibalistic residents of the jungle, some of them dressed in animal skins. The shaman who leads them against the Jesuit advance serves as the focal point of their confrontation with European imperialists. His body is “painted in a pattern like the markings of some jungle creature” (p. 58). The narrative of their murder of Father Julien Dupleix evokes revulsion as it reflects the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The Guaraní lash his limp body to a cross and place a crown of thorns on his head. As the cross drifts along the river towards the falls, children run along the banks and hurl mud at it (p. 59).

The same Guaraní whom Father Gabriel initially confronts when he goes above the Iguacu Falls are just as unsavoury and exotic. Bolt repeatedly uses the term “savage” to describe them (p. 92). Hacugh, the chief, snatches Gabriel’s oboe out of his hand and breaks it over his own knee. Some of his compatriots counsel killing the priest, while the hostile shaman, Tanretopra, implores them to eat their captive

(p. 93) and threatens to cast Gabriel into the river (p. 95). (Later Bolt, speaking through Father Gabriel at Altamirano's hearing in Asunción, emphasises that Guaraní who have converted to Christianity do not practise cannibalism.) The missionary's perception of the Guaraní is mixed; their general attributes mesh with his axiological hierarchy and moral standards in various ways. On the one hand, Gabriel admires their facility with spears and bows and finds their "benevolence with the babies" gratifying. On the other hand, echoing images of colonised peoples familiar in much British and other colonial discourse, he "brooded on their polygamy, their drunkenness and their sloth. When they had culled and caught all they needed for a single day, they were content to sit and talk, or sleep" (p. 96). Gabriel also appreciates their interest in music (p. 97). Bolt returns to the theme of Guaraní musicality briefly when Altamirano visits Asunción to conduct his hearing and is moved by the singing and ability of indigenes to play in an orchestra (pp. 219-221).

While Gabriel guides the establishment of the San Carlos mission, he learns to value more attributes of his hosts. Their desire to learn impresses him and his colleagues, as does their dexterity. "The musical instruments they made, shipped to Europe, were pronounced as good in ornamentation and tone as those made there", Bolt reports. Their own artifacts seem less impressive from his authorial viewpoint, however: "For themselves, they had invented only canoes, long bows, spears, cooking pots and simple looms and huts, and they were irresistibly attracted by new skills" (p. 135).

That the Guaraní are not at their best when reduced to servitude under Don Cabeza in Asunción is evident. When Mendoza enters the Captain-General's residence there, he finds the servants dozing and "squatting against one of the doors" (p. 43). The festival of the Guaraní Madonna in Asunción, however, gives Bolt an opportunity to present another dimension of the indigenes by describing the piety of converts and relating it explicitly to their servitude. Shortly before Rodrigo Mendoza discovers his brother in bed with Carlota, he crosses a plaza in the city, finding it "crammed to the walls with Guaraní, all kneeling or prostrate before their Madonna". Led liturgically by a Jesuit priest, these proselytes "repeated a Hail Mary while a soft drum kept time. All hoped that their Madonna would come down and, by a miraculous magic and transcendent gesture, make them free" (p. 131).

None of the Guaraní emerges as a particularly well-developed individual. Perhaps Bolt prudently avoided attempting to create finely defined characters representing an ethnic group about which he knew very little. There is no reason to believe that he did not care about the Guaraní or other subjugated peoples; in fact, *The Mission* testifies strongly to his concern. In any case, Bolt's primary interest lay in the moral dilemmas which his European characters confronted. His Ibaye, the priest who succeeds Father Gabriel at San Miguel, serves as an instrument in Bolt's hands for justifying collective ownership at that *reducción* and underscoring the supposed willingness of at least some of the Jesuits to transfer authority in the mission church to the indigenes. At San Carlos, meanwhile, Hacugh and Tanretopra foil one another in their reactions to Father Gabriel and Christianity in general. Rodrigo Mendoza's youthful companion, Babuie, remains a vague and peripheral player. One inevitably concludes that like the film, Bolt's novelisation is less a study of the Guaraní than of the Europeans who evangelise them and who oppose such evangelisation.

Other Theological and Missiological Issues

In narrating contacts between the Jesuits and the Guaraní, especially at the new San Carlos mission, Bolt delves surprisingly frequently into religious issues, especially those concerning missiological questions. His views are unsophisticated, but they clearly reflect a basic awareness of the significance of these matters in twentieth-century missiological debate. In this respect the novelisation probes more deeply than does the film.

One of the most elementary of these issues is what in the nomenclature of classic German missiology, where it was debated for decades during the nineteenth century, was that of *Volkschristianisierung* (*i.e.* Christianisation of ethnic groups) as opposed to *Einzelbekehrung* (*i.e.* conversion of individuals). Generally speaking, Roman Catholic missionaries, especially in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, followed the former strategy, seeking to bring entire tribes or other large units into the Christian fold. It fits the sacramental mode of mission well. The fact that these missionaries often propagated the Gospel in colonies of nominally Roman Catholic monarchies lent support to this approach. The *reducciones*, of course, were an

important dimension of this strategy in Latin America. Protestant missionaries, on the other hand, especially those whose roots lay in various pietistic movements in various European countries and North America, usually strove for the conversion of individuals, though of course with the hope of eventually effecting that of large numbers.

The most explicit reference to this issue occurs when the Jesuit Provincial, Father Ribero, summons Father Gabriel to Asunción to discuss the appointment of Ibaye to a position of leadership at San Miguel and the plight of Rodrigo Mendoza. During their initial conversation, Father Ribero asks his subaltern how many conversions had been effected at the new San Carlos mission. Father Gabriel admits that as yet there had been none but insists that, by their own account many were "almost ready". This approach displeases the Provincial. Bolt states that cleric's position bluntly and links the missiological issue to one of cultural respect: "He thought that Gabriel's regard for the Guarani as individuals was excessive. Mass conversion was good enough" (p. 141). Subsequently Bolt continues to comment on the varying attitudes of some of the Jesuits to the indigenous peoples whom they evangelise, but he does very little with the missiological question under discussion. One minor exception to this generalisation occurs during Altamirano's public hearing in Asunción. Rising to his feet, Father Ribero lauds his own order and declares without qualification that "we are confident that the Guarani will be numbered among the redeemed, which is to say that they have souls as acceptable to Christ as are our own" (p. 225). This is a crucial declaration which echoes a debate in which Spanish and other European colonisers of the Americas had engaged virtually from the outset. In the pertinent historiography, a focal point of this was the early sixteenth-century exchange in the Dominican order between Bartolomé de Las Casas, the whose criticism of the *encomienda-doctrina* system we have discussed in the section "Roman Catholic Missionary Endeavours in Latin America" of Chapter Two, and his Cordovan adversary Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, who lauded military service as a component of Christian discipleship and advocated warfare against the indigenous populations of the Americas as a vital and justifiable if not in all cases necessary step towards their evangelisation.¹ It is not known whether Bolt was aware of this debate, but in any case he would not have had to read extensively

in readily available surveys of the Iberian colonisation of the Americas to encounter it.

Bolt also explores briefly another matter that crops up repeatedly in the annals of Jesuit missions history in South America, namely the place of music in this general endeavour. He presents it as a matter on which there was no consensus in the eighteenth century. When Father Gabriel announces his intention to trek above the Iguazu Falls, he declares that he shall take music to the Guaraní there. His colleague Father Sebastian throws up his hands in disbelief and, when Father Gabriel questions his attitudes towards music, replies, "It leaves me indifferent". Taking a well-known quote from the pages of Jesuit history, Father Gabriel then reminds him that Minoria had vowed, "Give me an orchestra and I will conquer South America" (p. 89). This is cited differently from the words that Altamirano quotes narratively in the film. Its significance is not merely one of musical taste; this episode is one in which the larger question of disagreement over missionary strategy comes to the fore. In the film, however, the only disagreement between Father Gabriel and Father Sebastian is a minor one about whether the former should ascend the Iguazu Falls alone.

In any case, when Father Gabriel finally encounters the Guaraní in that remote area, he comes emphatically as a European, though one fluent in the vernacular language. Bearing an oboe, he plays a sonata by Händel (p. 33). Bolt emphasises indigenous acceptance of this through the mouth of Hacugh. That Guaraní chief informs Father Gabriel succinctly, "I would like to hear the oboe and the other instruments" (p. 97). Nowhere is there any indication that Father Gabriel or his colleagues ever seek to present the Gospel in the mode of indigenous music. Instead, they employ European liturgical music and put the Guaraní to work manufacturing European musical instruments.

Apart from the rôle of music, Bolt tells his readers relatively little about the techniques the Jesuits used to present the Gospel to the Guaraní. We learn that Father Gabriel carries a "cheap picture of the infant Christ sitting upright in Mary's sentimental arms" which he shows to the Guaraní, including one who has assumed that Jesus must have been a mighty warrior (p. 95). This missionary also proclaims Jesus Christ as the purveyor of "the greatest of friendships" and explains that "He guided His friends through the dark places and across the open spaces of life, and

at their death He opened His Kingdom to them, where they lived for ever” (p. 95). Curiously enough, in Bolt’s imagination of what the Jesuits actually preached to prospective converts he does not mention anything that directly reflects a concern for Christian social ethics. This leads one to wonder whether Bolt perceived the *reducciones* as merely a necessity for protecting the Guaraní from the devastation of slave traders and not in any sense as a logical expression of Christian social teaching.

Manual training plays a greater part than doctrine in Bolt’s presentation of Jesuit missionary methods. The Jesuits at San Carlos, we read, offer training in various skills, and the Guaraní are “irresistibly attracted by new skills”. The latter are “awestruck at the art of writing” and “quick to learn” how to read and write. Furthermore, the Guaraní soon become adept craftsmen making musical instruments equal to those fabricated in Europe. Though clearly sympathetic to much in indigenous culture, Bolt betrays a certain colonialist condescension towards it by remarking that prior to the advent of European civilisation the Guaraní “had invented only canoes, long bows, spears, cooking pots and simple looms and huts”, all of which, presumably, were less advanced than corresponding artifacts in Europe (p. 135).

This imbalance in Bolt’s consideration of Jesuit missionary methods leads him to present a vague picture of the manner in which they propagated Christian doctrines. When proclaiming his faith to the Guaraní, Father Gabriel “found their questions about it probed his beliefs, forcing him to go much deeper than he had expected”, Bolt writes obliquely. “He was compelled to elucidate fundamental principles to justify the simplest articles of faith, so that he was lost in deep thought and prayer for days”. Which doctrines thus stimulated the Guaraní, however, and whether Father Gabriel seeks to teach them in indigenous cultural dress remain unanswered questions. Bolt concludes this section of his narrative by noting cryptically that the Guaraní “were teaching him [*i.e.* Father Gabriel], and loved them for it” (p. 138). Bolt thus fails to develop a splendid opportunity to explore the ramifications of this idealistic priest’s teaching and how it affected the people amongst whom he was propagating Christianity. This could have been fruitful, especially because the converts and other inhabitants of the *reducción* at San Carlos, like the Jesuits themselves, react in varying ways to the joint Portuguese-Spanish colonial expeditionary force that invades and decimates their community.

At one point Bolt becomes more specific regarding the shape of the Christian message that the Jesuits proclaim at San Carlos. In a discussion with Tanretopra, Father Gabriel agrees with him that “The Devil has great power” (p. 159). The Guaraní shaman counters that “you also say that God takes women’s graces for his share - tending and pity and self-sacrifice”. Whether Gabriel has identified these divine attributes as feminine or Tanretopra has interpreted them as such remains unclear. In any case, the priest adds “love” to this catalogue of God’s properties. This prompts his interlocutor to declare, “But I choose men’s virtues. I choose bravery. I choose endurance”. Father Gabriel’s rejoinder comes swiftly and underscores that his own understanding of God is not one-sided: “Those are Christ’s virtues. What have you to say of cruelty and cowardice and deceit?” he asks rhetorically (p. 160). The particular significance of this crucial interchange - one of the very few of its kind in the novelisation and quite absent from the film - lies in the light it sheds on Father Gabriel’s personal spirituality well before he faces the dilemma which Altamirano’s announcement of the imminent closure of the missions poses. Like the background material about his ministry to oppressed peasants in Ireland, it reveals that this cleric perceives God as primarily a deity of love and compassion but also possessing attributes that in many cultures are associated with masculinity. Furthermore, the conversation indicates that Father Gabriel attempts to cast his proclamation in at least a moderately culturally sensitive mould, although the truncated nature of the exchange might leave missiologically inclined readers hungry for a lengthier and deeper treatment of this vital topic.

A closely related missiological theme that Bolt broaches very briefly is the interplay of European and Guaraní art in the construction of the chapel at San Carlos. When Father Gabriel oversees the erection of that structure at his new station, he convinces Hacugh, to participate in the task, even though neither that chief nor his subjects in the area have yet converted to Christianity. Despite the willing participation, in which they employ what appear to be tribal techniques of preparing logs from the forest, the chapel soon takes on a decidedly European look.

One can conclude that Bolt evinces keen interest in several key missiological and theological matters but fails to develop many of them to the extent that would have been possible in his novelisation, given the general expansion of that work beyond the filmscript. Obviously, he relates much about relations between missionary

endeavours on the one hand and both the intricacies of international politics and imperial economic interests on the other. Apart from these important issues, however, Bolt disappoints readers who might approach the novelisation of *The Mission* expecting detailed considerations of *inter alia* indigenous attitudes towards Christianity, the contextualisation of the Gospel or the governance of the mission church. His approach is understably and inescapably Eurocentric. What he serves up stimulates the appetite but fails to satisfy the belly.

The Question of Historicity

Bolt's work is primarily fictional; nowhere does this historical writer and former student of history claim that he has attempted to reproduce the past as closely as possible without taking liberties with documentable facts. Historical figures and imaginary ones populate his works in varying ratios. In *The Mission*, the latter predominate while most of the former provide the background against which his protagonists play their parts. The events depicted in this novelisation, like those in the corresponding film, are similarly a dual harvest gleaned from the pages of history texts and the contours of Bolt's fertile imagination. In our discussion of the film, we highlighted some of the difficulties involved in his conflation of historical events to fit the special demands of the cinema, especially in a work that sought to be both an epic and a more narrowly focused study of specific individuals' reactions to the dilemmas in which they found themselves at a critical juncture of missions history. The question now is to what extent Bolt has taken liberties with what could serve as a more detailed and accurate representation of this chapter of that history and, no less importantly, whether he has done justice to his subject in terms of literary artistry. The form of the novelisation, as we have emphasised, allows Bolt to develop his principal characters to a significantly greater degree than they appear on the screen. How do they and the events in which they participate fare in this regard?

In brief, one could easily conclude that as historical fiction the novelisation *The Mission* is only a slight improvement over the film. Bolt's product suggests that his research was both sketchy and rushed. Its historicity falls victim not only

to the refraction that virtually any representation of complex reality suffers when reduced to a narrative account, whether the latter be called history or literature, but also with regard to errors that distort history more than necessary and that need not have been committed and which add nothing to the literary quality of the work.

One of the most obvious of these is the character of Luis Altamirano. Little is known about this Jesuit emissary from the annals of the Society of Jesus or other sources, apart from the fact that he did in fact exist as an ecclesiastical functionary who travelled to South America in the 1750s to investigate the status of Jesuit missions there. Bolt ventures out on thin ice and breaks through into the chilly waters of unnecessary misrepresentation when he imagines that Altamirano was an Italian and seeks to explain the roots of his call to the priesthood. In fact, Altamirano, as his name clearly indicates, was a Spaniard. Few other facts about him are available in the pertinent scholarly literature in English. This may explain Bolt's inability to obtain solid information about the historical figure upon whom this pivotal character in the film and novelisation is based.

There are other, arguably minor, matters which cast aspersions on the historicity of *The Mission* and arguably diminish its cogency. For example, Bolt appears to believe that "week" was a Guaraní chronological concept before the coming of European Christianity to South America. Prussia is called a "minor Protestant state in Germany", an appellation which hardly does justice to the ascendancy of the realm of Frederick the Great in the middle of the eighteenth century. For the most part, it is perhaps most advisable to regard the novelisation of *The Mission*, no less than the film, as essentially a work of historically inspired fiction and not as an attempt to recreate history as it could be read from the most yielding written sources. Nevertheless, as literary art *The Mission* serves fairly well as a vehicle for conveying Bolt's keen interests in pointing out to twentieth-century readers *inter alia* certain evils of imperialism (here in the form of both eighteenth-century English hegemony in Ireland and Iberian colonialism in South America during the same period), the shortcomings of supposed military solutions to economic and political problems, and the necessity of individuals taking stances on moral issues which confront them, even when the complexity of such questions places them into dilemmas for which there are no simple answers. As such, the novelisation of *The Mission*, no less than the literary antecedents by Voltaire, Cunninghame Graham, and

Hochwalder discussed in the early chapters of this study, supports our hypothesis concerning how literary and cinematic depictions of Jesuit missions to the Guaran have tended to be used as historic evidence to support contemporary causes.

Notes

1. Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Las Casas: In Search of the Poor of Jesus Christ* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993), pp. 132-137, *passim*.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

CRITICAL RECEPTION OF *THE MISSION*

Introduction

Undeniably, *The Mission* would not have been produced had not the pecuniary interests of financially troubled Goldcrest been involved. As indicated in the chapter about the film itself, unlike *Romero*, to cite a pertinent contrast, this work was a commercial piece, not the creation of a religious organisation intended solely to enlighten viewers about an intriguing chapter in the history of the Society of Jesus or prick their consciences about the rôle of the Roman Catholic priesthood in supporting the social and economic liberation of the poor in contemporary South America. Nevertheless, as in every other film for which Robert Bolt wrote the screenplay, central moral issues in historical context are intended to make an impact on viewers. Not merely for artistic but also for practical reasons, therefore, the reception which critics gave this film are of interest. It sheds much light on both the film and the mentality of people who viewed it in many lands. In the present chapter, we shall probe the critical reception given *The Mission* in 1986 and 1987 by examining a representative cross-section of reviews published in newspapers and journals in England, the United States of America, the Netherlands, South Africa, and Sweden. Because the men who created this film received numerous awards, the first part of our treatment will focus on what many critics found commendable in it. Special attention will be paid to evaluations by Jesuit and other Roman Catholic commentators as well as Protestant counterparts. Then we shall turn our attention to those aspects of *The Mission* which some reviewers regarded as weaknesses. Finally, we shall seek to explain why critical judgement varied greatly and, in connection with this section of the chapter, point to numerous errors in what some critics wrote about *The Mission*, because in many cases it seems indisputable that in they overlooked crucial details in the film which might not have escaped a more rigorous examination of it and could have influenced their perception of its merits and flaws.

It will be obvious from the diversity of the critics whose evaluations we are considering that they approached their task of reviewing *The Mission* not only from divergent theological viewpoints but also with differing expectations of what a film about explicitly religious topics but nevertheless intended to be a work of entertainment should contain. These varying points of departure influenced their assessments of *The Mission*. A comparison of them also underscores the potential value of such a film beyond its obvious purposes with regard to entertainment and profitability.

An International Chorus of Praise

Both before and immediately after the premiere of *The Mission* in London in October 1986, British critics began to shower accolades on Putnam, Joffé, Bolt, Menges, and others who co-operated in its production. Within a few weeks, reviewers on both sides of the Atlantic joined the chorus of praise, usually in harmony with their British counterparts though occasionally striking different high notes.

Perhaps the first review to be published in the English capital was that by David Robinson in *The Times*. After seeing a preview of *The Mission*, he pronounced it "one of the most magnificent British films ever made". Much of his evaluation is truncated, to be sure, as he strung together accolades and less laudatory comments without substantiating them. But bolstering his overall assessment, Robinson cited Chris Menges' photography for capturing "extraordinary landscapes" and spectacular scenes in which the Iguazu Falls form the backdrop. These scenes, he believed, were "exemplary in execution, and go far to explain the film's success in Cannes". Robinson also praised Ennio Morricone's score for weaving together indigenous instruments with Baroque liturgical music. Turning his attention to the acting, this reviewer thought Ray McAnally's performance as Altamirano was "outstandingly the best in the film".¹

Also among the first to see and laud *The Mission* after it opened in London was Iain Johnstone, one of the cinema critics at *The Sunday Times*, whose comments similarly foreshadowed those of many other reviewers across national and linguistic borders. Writing the day after the premiere, he cast aside restraint in applauding

this film as “certainly beyond compare with the vast majority of modern movies”. More specifically, this reviewer insisted that “visually and viscerally, it is the most powerful film of the year”. Johnstone then proceeded to substantiate his bold assertions. Beginning with the screenplay, he declared that “the overwhelming achievement of Robert Bolt’s script is to recount events of two centuries ago with pinpoint historical accuracy yet infuse them with eternal moral dilemmas that are relevant today”. Johnstone commended the manner in which Joffé had employed this screenplay, averring that he “again demonstrates the passion and intelligence that he brought to *The Killing Fields*”. Johnstone understood, of course, that Joffé had not created alone: “Prudently, he has stuck to the same team, his eye aided by the incomparable photography of Chris Menges. . .”. He also praised the “intuitive hand” of editor Jim Clark for splicing the extensive footage so seamlessly. Johnstone did not praise Jeremy Irons’ Father Gabriel, reserving most of his accolades for Robert De Niro, whose “masterful relationship with the camera remains unchallenged: he manages to express so much with so little and shares with William Hurt the ability to leave a portion of his character empty for the audience to fill”. This critic thought De Niro’s part in the “supremely moving climax” particularly gratifying, as he “finds the true meaning of faith as Irons is beginning to confront his”. Finally, Johnstone appreciated the majesty of the natural backdrop against which *The Mission* was filmed: “The towering splendour of the Iguazu Falls not only forms a natural obstacle between the missionaries and the natives in the rain forest whom they want to convert - is it possible that there is another, non-Catholic, God who wishes to impede their mission?”²

Writing in *The Times Literary Supplement* a few days later, Anthony Pagden praised *The Mission* for both its inherent cinematic quality and its contemporary moral relevance. He called it “a powerful and compelling film with all the technical brilliance, and much of the same urgency, which marked *The Killing Fields*” and guessed that “few could fail to be moved by it”. Linking the past with the present, Pagden asserted that “no one, however little he or she may know about the plight of the Amerindians then and now, could fail to sense the force in Altamirano’s doubt that the Indians may have preferred ‘that the sea and the wind had not brought any of us to them’”. This critic found the acting in *The Mission* generally laudable

and thought that “Joffé has extracted the very best from his cast”. After admitting that Jeremy Irons “sometimes looks and sounds more like an English country parson than an eighteenth-century Jesuit”, but without describing his vision of the latter, Pagden turned from demeanour to the pivotal ethical conundrum and allowed that he “powerfully conveys the dilemma of one sworn to obey a command which he knows to be morally wrong”. De Niro’s rôle seemed equally impressive, as that American actor was “convincing, always keeping the old Mendoza, his violence now directed towards other ends, just visible beneath the surface”. Ray McAnally, moreover, had “brilliantly portrayed” Altamirano. Pagden reserved his most fervent accolades, however, for the indigenous members of the cast. They had given “the finest and most moving performances of all”. Their physiognomies had displayed “an almost bewildering range of emotions from the human laughter with which they greet the sight of the exhausted, tear-stained Mendoza and his net full of rusty weapons, to the terror in the eyes of the children as they march slowly out to face the Portuguese cannon”.³

British reviewers whose overall impressions of *The Mission* were less enthusiastic than those of e.g. Pagden and Johnstone were nonetheless quite willing to concede that the film had noteworthy merits. Writing in *The Listener* in October 1986, for instance, Margaret Walters agreed with her counterparts at many other publications in England and abroad that “technically it’s superb and, through Chris Menges’s lens, the exotic locations look spectacular”. She also concurred that Ray McAnally’s rôle as Altamirano was “wonderfully played” and believed that to some extent De Niro’s and Irons’s performances were praiseworthy. Beyond these limited words of praise, however, Walters was not prepared to go.⁴

The Mission was also warmly received in the Netherlands, where it was initially shown not long after the premiere in London. Writing in the periodical *Film en Televisie* in November 1986, Dirk Michiels praised the film for raising the question of how history might have run a different course had the attitudes of men like Father Gabriel prevailed amongst colonists there. “Hoe anders inderdaad had Latijns-Amerika er nu uitgezien als de liefde uit de ‘reducciones’ het pleit gewonnen had?” he asked rhetorically. Emblematically postulating a grand historical vision of colonial history, Michiels warmly recommended *The Mission* as a study of relations between

“het Zwaard en het Kruis: symbolen van de samenwerking tussen Staat en Kerk, waardoor de conquista van het Amerikaanse continent bezegeld werd”.⁵

His colleague at *Film en Televisie*, Erwin Goegebeur, went into considerably greater detail in his analysis, stressing the dilemma which the inescapably violent historical situation in which the two principal missionaries find themselves poses. “**The Mission** is dan ook op de eerste plaats een discussiefilm over het thema van de morele schuld en de keuze voor of tegen geweld”, he concluded. More specifically, Goegebeur thought the way in which the question of individual guilt was woven together with the attack on imperialism was thematically masterful. Again, the explicit contemporary relevance of an historical topic found favour, as “de link met de actuele brandhaarden van Midden en Zuid-Amerika, waar de Kerk een politieke rol kan, wil of niet mag spelen, overduidelijk is”. Bolt’s treatment of this historical yet current predicament, Goegebeur believed, meshed with the “overweldigende natuurfotografie” and such exotic elements in Morricone’s score as the use of the pan flute to reinforce the impression of a truly great film.⁶

By the 1980s anti-imperialism was virtually an article of faith in Swedish literary and other intellectual circles, and the reception which *The Mission* received in Sweden reflected that general sentiment. Critics writing both in the Stockholm dailies and in the provincial press viewed this film as *inter alia* an international protest against both the Iberian conquest of South America and contemporary mistreatment of indigenous peoples there. Some reviewers also gave the religious elements their due. One was Helena von Zweigbergk, who commented on the film in the eminent cinema magazine *Chaplin*. To her, *The Mission* was “a religious film to the highest degree” in which the Guaraní sing like angels and Father Gabriel is a symbolic Christ figure. Von Zweigbergk thought its conclusive message was the glory of dying for a just cause in a world which leaves little room for goodness. She also paid tribute to the magnificent photographic achievement of Chris Menges and the acting of the Guaraní, regretting only that under Joffé’s direction they were generally reduced to the insouciant souls which Hollywood has often made of tribal peoples and that their will had been shunted to the periphery of the plot. Where, von Zweigbergk wondered, was there any evidence of conflict between the pre-contact

convictions of these malleable Guaraní and the belief system which the Jesuits had bestowed upon them?⁷

Hanserik Hjertén gave *The Mission* mixed marks in the prominent Stockholm daily newspaper *Dagens Nyheter*. Like many other reviewers in Sweden and elsewhere, he paid tribute to Menges and McAnally. Hjertén also found value in the kernel of historical truth which the film conveyed about resistance to European colonisation and the echoes of relevance for twentieth-century social and economic conflicts in South America. On the other hand, he faulted the screenplay for failing to probe in greater depth the historical problems with which it dealt or the inner conflicts which burdened the principal characters. What seems to have troubled him most, however, was the Eurocentric essence of *The Mission*. The plot, Hjertén believed, should have focused on the Guaraní rather than dealing with them only secondarily. Instead, “these Christian savages are only allowed to decorate the Jesuit utopia”.⁸

Echoes from South Africa

In none of the national clusters of reviews examined in connection with the research for this study does one find a higher degree of consensus about *The Mission* than in South Africa. From Cape Town to the Witwatersrand, critics lauded it almost without reserve after it arrived some three months after the premieres in London and New York. Writing in *Argus Tonight*, Derek Wilson set the prevailing tone by pulling out all the stops and telling readers in the Mother City that “*The Mission* has arrived on paeans of praise, all of which are deserved. There is little one can add to the euphoria. It is a magnificent film technically, cinematographically, dramatically, [and] directorially”. Wilson highlighted the achievements of most of the principal men involved both before and behind the camera, beginning with “the strong screenplay by veteran screenwriter Robert Bolt”, which formed the “bedrock” of the film. He lauded the “uplifting performance” of Jeremy Irons in playing Father Gabriel as a “dignified, gentle but firm, aloof and yet a quietly commanding presence”. One of Joffé’s pivotal achievements as director, Wilson

believed, was juxtaposing Irons and De Niro, as this had created “an omnipresent current of tension which occasionally breaks through an uneasy calm”. This Capetonian even praised American actor Chuck Low as “a powerfully unsettling presence as the crucial Spanish governor of the ceded territory” but in thus misidentifying the historic rôle of Don Cabeza revealed some of his limits as a critic. Like most other reviewers on an international scale, Wilson lauded Menges’s cinematography, which he called “indescribably exquisite”, and Morricone’s score, especially the choral sections which empathised “powerfully with the visuals”.⁹

Peter Goldsmid examined the thematic content in greater detail and shifted much of the emphasis from individual achievements to comprehensive impressions when he reviewed *The Mission* for *The Weekly Mail*. He too began with a logorrhea of praise, calling this film “intelligent, thoughtful, powerful, subtle, well acted, beautifully photographed, [and] even relevant”. Goldsmid judged that “*The Mission* is ultimately a meditation on the ethical justification of violence and an exploration of the values through which people seek meaning in life - and death”. He also noted, however, that on the surface it is “a drama of epic proportions”, thereby touching on but not exploring what some other critics regarded as a principal weakness of this film, namely its vacillation between the macrocosm of panoramic historical depiction and the typically Boltian microcosm of individual dilemmas in historical context. Goldsmid gave credit to both the screenwriter and the director for elucidating the impact of “corrupt and venal Europe, with its materialism, violence and slavery”, on the indigenous peoples of South America. Yet he found it equally “to the credit of Bolt and Joffé that they do not spell out the moral, religious, political and ethical questions *The Mission* raises”. What this reviewer meant by this comment is not apparent, particularly when one considers *inter alia* Father Gabriel’s explicit remarks on the question of violence. Goldsmid emphasised, in any case, that these issues “are at the very centre of the drama” and make *The Mission* “not merely fine entertainment but deeply challenging also”.¹⁰

Jean-Jacques Cornish sounded one of the rare moderately sour notes in South African reactions to *The Mission*. Evaluating it in the *Pretoria News*, he gave it three stars of a possible five. He promised prospective viewers that “the film will be a rare sensory experience” and thought that Altamirano was “superbly played

by McAnally". Cornish also commended the "peerless quality" of the acting by Irons and De Niro. Apart from these accolades, however, he severely qualified his compliments, especially with regard to Bolt's script. Cornish understood that *The Mission* was a retrospective, imputed reflection of contemporary liberation theology but thought that as such "it makes points at the expense of the entertainment value of this film". At the end of the day, he thought, Bolt's screenplay was "too strident to equal the timeless dignity of his 'A Man For All Seasons'".¹¹

Jesuit and Other Roman Catholic Reactions

From a perspective which arguably might have given them special insight into the spiritual and ethical problems posed in *The Mission*, reviewers in Jesuit and other Roman Catholic journals gave it mixed marks. Writing in the Jesuit periodical *America*, for instance, Professor Richard A. Blake, S.J., of Georgetown University crafted what, despite numerous minor errors, is unquestionably one of the most penetrating of the dozens of reviews read in connection with the present study. He did not laud *The Mission* without reserve but cast his praise in a relative mould, stressing that it was "far superior to the standard product of Hollywood or London", and found several points for which he thought its creators should be commended. Unlike many other critics, Blake found the film's greatest strength in the performances of its principal Caucasian actors. The "most convincing of the leads", he believed, was Ray McAnally, who successfully conveyed an ecclesiastical yet ultimately worldly character with "regal presence", a man who is not a villain and possibly not even corrupt but "who has compromised his ideals before and would not refuse to compromise them again". Winning Blake's silver medal was Robert De Niro, chiefly because of his creation of "a powerful Mendoza who seethes with unfocused rage even at his most tender moments with the Indian children", a critical perception which defies the smiles and laughter which characterise Mendoza's demeanour during much of his time at San Carlos. To Blake, this redeemed sinner and Jesuit novice seemed to be essentially a "caged and tormented animal" unable to shake off the chains of his guilt, despite his arduous penance and acceptance

by both the Guaraní and the local representatives of the Society of Jesus. More reservedly, Blake found Jeremy Irons less impressive than De Niro but, arguably unfairly, changed the criteria for judging him by focusing on the character he played rather than on his acting. Indeed, his Jesuit, in stark contrast to Rodrigo Mendoza, “often borders on softness” and has a “slight lisp and compassionate expression” which “clash with the rigors of the life he has led and the ordeal he must face”. Blake saw in Irons’s Father Gabriel less a tragic hero than a victim of both his exceptionally placid personality and circumstances beyond his control. Another focal point of this reviewer’s praise was the visual centre of *The Mission*, namely the Iguacu Falls and the rôle they play. While other critics were generally content to describe the physical beauty of that backdrop, Blake considered what he regarded as the obvious metaphorical depth of that cascade and its environs. “The insistent, relentless rush of water over the falls forms a leitmotif of fate”, he believed in a curious departure from Christian theological cogitation and concepts; “man may climb safely once, twice, but inevitably the waters will overpower him”.¹²

Writing in *Commonweal*, a respected Catholic journal of news and opinion, Irish-American film critic Tom O’Brien dropped most of his inhibitions in lauding *The Mission*. The contemporary relevance of this picture was not lost on him. It would “not be comforting to those who dismiss liberation theology”, he predicted during that time when the Vatican’s confrontation with Leonardo Boff and other liberationists was receiving international attention, “or ignore the murder of Latin American archbishops and nuns when committed by right-wing fanatics”. O’Brien credited both Bolt’s script and Puttnam’s courageous production of the film for this latter-day significance. Their co-operation, he believed, had debunked the widely held attitude that “moral questions can’t be fused with exciting narrative”. O’Brien also thought that much of the acting was admirable, particularly that of De Niro, who he suggested “deserves an Oscar nomination for facial acting, concentrating the pain and irony of his position into eyes and cheek muscles”. Jeremy Irons impressed him nearly as much, although O’Brien apparently had difficulty fathoming the kind of character portrayed. In his eyes, Father Gabriel was “sublimely restrained, suggesting either a mad stoic or perfect saint”. Symptomatic of the enigmatic character which Ray McAnally played, however, O’Brien differed sharply from

Blake in assessing his performance. “McAnally is supposed to be caught between loyalty to conscience and reasons of state”, he thought in what appears to be a fundamental misunderstanding of this character. “But he is opaquely enigmatic, swerving from one position to another without appropriate dramatic buildup or semblance of conflict”.¹³

Protestant Reactions

Many Protestant reviewers expressed nearly as much as enthusiasm for *The Mission* as did their Roman Catholic counterparts in the religious press, while others rejected the film for a variety of reasons which did not necessarily have anything to do with denominational loyalty.

David Neff of the nondenominational American “evangelical Protestant” magazine *Christianity Today* declared that *The Mission* had performed a valuable service to Christians by posing questions about their moral duties in dealing with oppression. “Are we called to fight the world with the world’s weapons? to respond to earthly pressures by trying to live at peace with the powers that be? to offer potentially suicidal nonviolent resistance and ignore questions of effectiveness in favor of faithfulness to an ideal of love and justice?” He pointed out that in contrast to the content of the dialogue in *A Man for All Seasons*, Bolt had not in that of the present film offered detailed discussions of these or other issues but had provided the framework for them by relying on a concrete historic situation to establish the choices. By doing so, Neff believed, “*The Mission* offers an excellent opportunity for church high-school classes and other discussion-oriented groups to examine the available moral options”. The statement of this moral educational purpose formed the crux of Neff’s review. His other positive comments focused on the authenticity of the sets, particularly those in Colombia, Daniel Berrigan’s part as an advisor, and what he collectively called “memorable cinematic moments”, particularly such explicitly religious ones as the martyrdom depicted at the outset of the film and the forgiveness of Rodrigo Mendoza by the Guaraní chief. Neff did not endorse liberation theology, which would have flown in the face of the Protestant orthodoxy

which *Christianity Today* seeks to represent, or even mention it by name, but he lauded the contemporary relevance of the problems it broached: "And it does not take much imagination to apply the issues so poignantly raised by *The Mission* to other parts of the globe".¹⁴ Neff's comments are particularly significant from a missiological viewpoint, because they raise the question of the purpose - or purposes - of the cinema. To him, it seemed virtually self-evident that a film like *The Mission* transcended the realm of entertainment and pointed to the potential didactic value of certain works which were conceived as commercial ventures intended to make money by providing entertainment.

James Wall, editor of the theologically inclusive, nondenominational American magazine *The Christian Century*, reviewed *The Mission* at the close of 1986. He thought there were two reasons to see it, namely, "its scenery, and two, its retelling of a moment in Jesuit history of which the order is quite proud and most of the rest of us have never heard". Wall also averred that "any film company that can persuade Daniel Berrigan to set aside his antinuclear activities to travel to South America as a consultant and bit player also deserves attention". Nevertheless, he thought *The Mission* was essentially a failure and attributed this to three cardinal weaknesses, all of which point to a disharmony between the film and the historical events which it purports to depict. First, Wall believed that it did not "make credible the conflict between the Jesuits and the Vatican", which he perceived as fundamentally the incompatibility of the former's missionary goals with the geopolitical policy of the latter. Secondly, Wall was sceptical about the attempt to create twentieth-century relevance, because "the events on which the film is based led to a tragic ending which had more to do with papal politics than with contemporary theology". In other words, the effort to relate *The Mission* to liberation theology is overdrawn. Thirdly, Wall thought many of the characters were little more than caricatures of the groups of people whom they typified. Both the "perfect" Guaraní and the "pure" Jesuits struck him as simply "too good to be true".¹⁵

By contrast, one of the most bitter reviews to appear in the religious press was written by Harry Cheney, the film commentator at the politically conservative, nondenominational American Protestant magazine *Christian Herald*. Having studied at a Jesuit university, he professed to hold the Society of Jesus in the highest regard

and, in what he may have intended as a compliment, asserted that “whether teaching cinema or converting savages, the Jesuits lay hold to their calling with all the tenacity of an inspired pit bull [terrier]”. Cheney found little in *The Mission* to praise, however, apart from the impressive scene in which Rodrigo Mendoza lugs the instruments of his military past through the jungle and up an incline near the Iguazu Falls. What irked this politically transparently conservative viewer were the ideological implications of the work. They coloured his perception of both Bolt’s screenplay and the final editing. Cheney derided Father Gabriel’s words to Mendoza about the difficulty which love experiences in a world governed by might. This, he declared revealingly, was “a dubious sentiment at best, but one befitting the overt leftist sentiments of the film”. Cutting the same swath through the narrow field of his criticism, he thought that despite its promising beginning, *The Mission* has “degenerated into pure socialist agitprop”. Cheney was especially riled by the card at the end of the film reminding viewers that in recent times some of the South American clergy have continued to aid indigenous peoples in their struggle for social and economic justice. Without adducing any evidence or offering any explanation, he declared that this referred to liberation theologians “who would impose a Marxist slave system on the continent”.¹⁶

Transatlantic Negative Criticism

It is not at all uncommon for highly publicised films to receive accolades from some critics and be denounced by others. In this regard, *The Mission* was no exception. Only a few months after winning the *Palme d’Or* at Cannes, and within days of being heralded after its premieres in London and New York, it came under transatlantic fire for supposedly failing to meet lofty cinematic standards. In some cases, reviewers who had found much to commend in *The Mission* also berated what they believed were its weaknesses. In other instances, critics praised only Morricone’s score, Menges’ photography, or both before going on to disparage other key elements of the production. In the present section we shall examine a

representative selection of both qualified and one-sidedly negative criticism in reviews other than those already cited in the religious press.

Stanley Kauffmann, the often hard-hitting film critic at the politically liberal American magazine *The New Republic*, found *The Mission* thoroughly disappointing *ab initio*. He reported that after viewing only its first ten minutes, his reaction was “All right, now we know what you want to do. Please start over again and get it right”. Kauffmann found the underlying defect in Bolt’s script and wondered “why so many experienced filmmakers couldn’t have seen the same thing, why they couldn’t spot the flaws in the screenplay before shooting started”. He believed that Bolt should have adhered much more closely to the plot of Fritz Hochwalder’s drama which had inspired Fernando Ghia to launch the project in the 1970s. Kauffmann admitted that the English version of *Das heilige Experiment*, which was staged on Broadway in 1953 under the title *The Strong Are Lonely*, was “a thesis play with poster characters and contrived climaxes” but nevertheless respected Hochwalder’s clarity in expressing his theme. By contrast, “Bolt slimmed down the political-social aspects of the subject, puffed up the religious aspect into movie pietism, provided a set of characters who are not even good posters, and capped his elaborate action with a simplified battle climax that is childish as the coda of a work on a serious theme”. Moreover, Kauffmann found the dialogue so “insipid” that he suspected that many of the lines spoken in the film had not flowed from Bolt’s pen but were “subsequent tamperings”. He also faulted the epilogue projected at the end of the film for supposedly departing from the subject of the film. Unlike many other reviewers who castigated *The Mission*, Kauffmann was unwilling to grant that any of the acting in this film was worthy. Jeremy Irons had failed to lend any depth to Father Gabriel, leaving him a one-dimensional, saccharine character, but Kauffmann thought Bolt deserved part of the blame for this. He related that on the eve of the filming, Irons had gone on a Jesuit retreat to gain more insight into the spirituality of the man whom he was to play. “With a role written and directed like this one”, Kauffmann suggested cynically, “Irons might as well have spent the time at a Club Med”. Continuing in a vein of sarcasm, he declared that De Niro had played Rodrigo Mendoza “almost perceptibly”. “De Niro has never given such a perfunctory performance”, Kauffmann judged, in failing to instill any content

in this “vacuous character”. Chuck Low, as the villainous Don Cabeza “who makes Simon Legree look subtle”, made an entirely negative impression on Kauffmann, who thought that his “expresso-bar accent and manner render his scenes ridiculous”. Not even Ray McAnally, whose part most other critics lauded, received an approving nod from Kauffmann, who thought he merely went through “trite tussles between truth and expediency”. Kauffmann devoted nearly all of his negative review to these and other points at which he thought *The Mission* was particularly vulnerable and failed to indicate in any meaningful or noteworthy manner what the issues in the film were.¹⁷

Nearly as devastating was the evaluation which Vincent Canby of *The New York Times* gave *The Mission* upon its North American premiere. Grudgingly acknowledging its screenwriter’s achievements in previous films, he thought this one was “a lesser variation on the kind of stately, ‘important’ movie making exemplified by Mr. Bolt’s ‘A Man for All Seasons.’” Canby resorted to graphic zoological metaphors in describing the writer’s failed creativity in this particular instance: “Give Mr. Bolt what he takes to be a big theme and he’s as happy as a puppy with a large bone. He plays with it, chews on it and then buries it - in this case under a load of scenes that state points without dramatizing them, in fancy locutions that must be the stuff of the nightmares of sensible actors”. Canby found no such prudent Thespians in this work. Neither De Niro’s nor Irons’s part satisfied him, and Ray McAnally as Altamirano was not much better, as Joffé had supposedly turned him into a “stock figure, even down to that obligatory close-up of the large, jeweled ring on his fat finger”. The Guaraní, moreover, “are condescended to as mostly smiling, trusting, undifferentiated aspects of Eden - innocents with sweet singing voices and a lot of rhythm”. Canby concluded that *The Mission* is “a singularly lumpy sort of movie” whose relevance to his own day was not sufficiently subtle. “Will audiences understand the parallels between the 18th century and the late 20th, when many priests in Latin America have also found themselves at odds with Rome?” he asked rhetorically. Canby’s own answer was 24-carat sarcasm: “If you need the answers spelled out in large print, you won’t want to miss ‘The Mission.’”¹⁸

One of the briefest, most stinging, and most superficial reviews was written by Mario Grut in the popular Stockholm daily *Aftonbladet*. Remembering that Joffé's *The Killing Fields* had received three Oscars (none of which he thought justified), Grut asserted that Joffé had done little more than trade cannons for waterfalls. He thus panned *The Mission* as "equally impossible". The awarding of the *Palme d'Or* in Cannes, Grut believed, was "good pay for magnificent kitsch". He derisively concluded that the chief value of the film lay in its potential use as a travel advertisement.¹⁹

Roland Joffé's Comments after the Premiere

When interviewed at length by film critic Michael Dempsey in Los Angeles a few months after *The Mission* was released on both sides of the Atlantic, the articulate director Roland Joffé made numerous comments which shed light on the production of this film as well as some of his intentions in its creation. He judiciously refrained from evaluating the overall success of the project, but his remarks make it evident that he was quite satisfied with his work and that of the other people who had co-operated in the production. Joffé also made clear his disagreement with certain points at which reviewers had criticised the work. His comments are thus particularly germane to a consideration of the international reception of *The Mission*.

Joffé defended the general historicity of the film and declared that "we tried to change as little as we could". Father Gabriel and Rodrigo Mendoza, he conceded, were Bolt's fictive creations. but he insisted that "there were individual Jesuits who took the stand that they took". Who these men were, Joffé did not specify, and with regard to the armed resistance to the closure of the *reducciones* he admitted that "there is debate on whether there were Jesuits who actually died during the event". To this director, however, such details did not contradict the historical truth embodied in the broad typing of the clergy represented in *The Mission*.²⁰

In harmony with this view, Joffé thought that while some viewers might perceive Father Gabriel's proceeding out of the burning chapel at San Carlos bearing the monstrance as soldiers attack that *reducción* as "madness", he himself thought the

action “ambiguous” but incorporating “an absolute logic”. Unfortunately, Joffé did not explain what this rationality might be. Indeed, almost squaring the circle, he emphasised that “you have no idea what’s next. Gabriel has no idea. The outside observer, in a sense, has no idea”. At the same time, no doubt well aware that Pagden and other reviewers in London and elsewhere had criticized Jeremy Irons’s interpretation of an eighteenth-century Jesuit, Joffé defended his acting, which he believed had brought out the idealism of the character without making the rôle “mawkish”.²¹

Similarly, in indirect response to another recurrent criticism, Joffé insisted that the indigenous characters in *The Mission* had not been idealised. He allowed that the “noble savage” stereotype had repeatedly bedevilled the cinema, and that therefore “the criticism is a valid criticism generally” but asserted that when “applied to this film, it’s trite and convenient and way off the mark”. Joffé declared, “Those Indians are in the film actually as they are. I didn’t alter them, manipulate them, or anything. The innocence that they have, that’s precisely their problem, that they are open, they are trusting”. Joffé also took issue with the position that the Guaraní simply should have rejected the blandishments of the Society of Jesus and attempted to retain their indigenous culture fully without contamination from European civilisation. At stake were both historical truth and fundamental human rights. “What people may find confusing is the fact that the Indians made their choice for the Jesuits”, he explained. “Because you hold the moral high ground, and because part of your moral high ground is to say, ‘Modern civilization is bad; therefore, Indians shouldn’t have it,’ doesn’t mean that you can then afford to ignore the rights of the Indians. I think that’s intensely paternalistic”.²²

Joffé acknowledged what to some reviewers was obviously his interest in liberation theology as a tendentious element linking his historical subject to contemporary concerns in Latin America. “The film in that sense is intimately concerned with the struggle for liberation in liberation theology”, he explained, “and that’s why the historical perspective is very important, because what its actually saying is that these people [*i.e.* liberation theologians and other ecclesiastical defenders of the oppressed] haven’t come out of nowhere”. Joffé found precedents in such European phenomena as the Albigensian sect and other schismatic movements whose

leaders “were not only motivated by a different eschatological view of the meaning of life but also by a political sense and an economic sense, that they felt that they had to be responsible for the daily lives of the people”. The recurrence of this in the history of Christianity, he explained, had underlain his conviction of its significance to the film, in which he had sought to embody “without giving a historical lecture about it”.²³

Diverse Other Voices

When interviewed by the Swedish journalist Stephan Linnér at Cannes during the festival at which *The Mission* received the coveted *Palme d'Or*, Jeremy Irons cast additional light on the film and his relationship to its production and content. Noting that he was highly selective about the films in which he accepted rôles, he reported that he had entered the scene and signed a contract only a few weeks before filming began in South America. Initially, Irons had reservations about undisclosed parts of Bolt's script but, cognizant of Joffé's success with *The Killing Fields*, yielded to that director's judgement and did not challenge his lines. Furthermore, Irons wondered whether he could successfully play the part of a pious, eighteenth-century Roman Catholic priest, not least because his own admittedly subjective concept of divinity was not the theism of the church but rather of “a kind of spirit which is within us”. Irons credited the assistance of Daniel Berrigan with providing him sufficient insight into Jesuit spirituality to manage his difficult part. The indigenous actors had also deepened his understanding of the historic clashes of cultures from a much different perspective. Irons had spent time hunting, swimming, and eating with them and even attempted to learn the rudiments of their opaque language. They had impressed him as a sincere but defeated people in the twilight of their cultural existence. His overall impression, he concluded, was one of great satisfaction with *The Mission*.²⁴

Heralded Cinematographer Chris Menges also shed additional light on *The Mission* shortly after its release, not merely the technical aspects but also its historicity. Predictably, when interviewed in *American Cinematographer* at that

time, he made almost exclusively positive remarks about the film. From his perspective, editor Jim Clark deserved much of the credit for its artistic success. The technical staff also harvested his praise for its accomplishments in erecting temporary structures in the jungle which made high quality filming possible. On the other hand, Menges conceded that “at times it was equally difficult to keep historical perspective” and pointed that one unnamed “authority in Latin American history” whom Goldcrest had invited to an advance screening of *The Mission* had found it “awfully idyllic”. Yet even this historian’s judgement was partly favourable; he had lauded the recreation of eighteenth-century Asunción and reportedly had “no serious complaints about the film”. Menges himself recognised the limitations inevitably imposed by the telescoping of so much history into a production of two hours. “Therefore, there are great chunks missing”, he admitted. “What did the Guarani think about actually being contacted by the Jesuits?” was one major question which he agreed *The Mission* left unanswered. Yet this aspect of limitation apparently did not trouble Menges a great deal. Indeed, he emphasised that far from providing facile answers, one purpose of the cinema should be to “lead you to thinking and feeling and responding”.²⁵

In a commentary springing from a much different kind of motivation, Robin Hanbury-Tenison, the President of Survival International in London, responded to Iain Johnstone’s review of *The Mission* by writing to *The Sunday Times* in early November 1986. Hanbury-Tenison did not comment directly on the cinematic qualities of the film, choosing instead to direct readers’ attention to the contemporary relevance of its depiction of indigenous living conditions. “Many of your readers may not realise that the surviving Indians are facing almost as difficult a time as their ancestors were during the period depicted in *The Mission*”, he suggested. Without adducing any evidence, Hanbury-Tenison declared that “in Paraguay, manhunts for nomadic Indians are still going on, and many survivors remain slaves in all but name”. In Colombia, meanwhile, part of the plot of *The Mission* was being repeated by analogy; “only two years ago, a Colombian priest, an Indian himself, was gunned down by landowners’ thugs for trying to defend Indian land”.²⁶

The Quandary of Divided Expert Opinion

In some respects, the starkly contrasting opinions of *The Mission* which reviewers committed to print in 1986 and 1987 are readily explained by the lack of universally accepted criteria for evaluating films. This fact becomes especially apparent when critics are judging a film which spans interwoven historical, ethical, religious, and psychological themes. The fact that Bolt, Joffé, and the other creators of *The Mission* sought to record with some degree of accuracy an historical event while also underscoring the contemporary relevance, *mutatis mutandis*, of the conflicts which give it its dramatic tension, complicates the matter, as does the inherent and inescapable necessity of making religious topics immediately meaningful to viewers whose degree of spirituality ranges from moribund to vibrant. What touchstone does one thus use to assay a film which attempts to be so much to a highly diversified, international audience?

To be sure, something approaching a consensus of opinion exists regarding the desirability of such elements as convincing acting, smooth editing, appropriateness of background music, and striking camera angles. On most of these counts, *The Mission* fared quite well in critical eyes. The obvious exception to this generalisation lies in the mixed reviews which Irons and De Niro received for their rôles as Father Gabriel and Rodrigo Mendoza. The boldest line of demarcation separating those critics who lauded *The Mission* from their counterparts who panned it runs through the minefield of the film's content. Reviewers crossed verbal swords chiefly in their reactions (or, in surprisingly many instances, their lack thereof) to the religious and ethical problems posed and, in a very few cases, in the political convictions which coloured their perceptions of a film which stands unabashedly near the left end of the ideological spectrum. As we have noted, many critics either accepted without comment the consequent explicit application of the historical episode depicted to contemporary South America or thought the lesson was too obvious to require the printed epilogue. Only a few, such as Cheney at *Christian Herald*, flatly rejected the political stance of *The Mission* and thought it detracted significantly from the quality of this film.

To be sure, on the most rudimentary level some reviewers simply misunderstood details of the film and consequently committed to print erroneous perceptions. Even the scholarly Jesuit Richard A. Blake thus perpetuated numerous mistakes in his otherwise so perceptive review. He claimed, for instance, that “the story is set in 1753”, a chronological inexactitude which contradicts the text printed on the screen at the beginning of the film. Blake then called the priest who is shown hurtling over the Iguazu Falls as “a nameless Jesuit missionary”, when in fact Father Gabriel clearly refers to him as “Father Julien”. He believed that Father Gabriel visited the fratricidal Rodrigo Mendoza “in prison”, but the pastoral call in question takes place within the walls of the Jesuit headquarters in Asunción. Blake stated that at the time when the plot unfolds, “the line dividing the territories of Spain and Portugal is to be moved”, whereas the Treaty of Madrid of 1750 had already made that shift a *fait accompli*. Similar errors, though usually in smaller numbers, mar many of the other reviews considered in this chapter.

The religious content of *The Mission* undoubtedly caused problems for many reviewers on an international scale. This can be said of both those who praised the film and those who found little they could regard as praiseworthy in it. In most of the reviews examined as part of the research for the present study, there is very little or no evidence of adequate theological sophistication to understand such pivotal, inherent issues as the modes of conducting mission or the clash of the deontological ethics of Biblical prescription with the teleological or situation ethics present in much liberation theology and its precursors. Less exacting religious topics, such as the range of personality types in the ranks of the clergy, also caused confusion. Presumably, it would be entirely unrealistic to expect such intellectual preparation on the part of critics in the secular media whose task it is to comment very frequently - in some instances almost daily - on films spanning a broad spectrum of topics. Yet, surprisingly enough, even theologically educated reviewers generally failed to give the religious aspects of *The Mission* their due.

By analogy, much the same can be said of reactions to the historicity of the film. Few critics, harried as they generally are to meet editors' deadlines, have sufficient time (or, one suspects, the inclination) to do even the most superficial reading about the historical background of events depicted in ostensibly historical

films. In this case, they were presented with an episode in the history of Jesuit missions during the eighteenth century, a topic which must have struck most of them as quite arcane. In fairness to the men and women who were asked to review *The Mission*, it should be noted that even many Roman Catholic ecclesiastical historians outside the Society of Jesus apparently know little about many of the details of this relatively tenebrous corner of their multifaceted discipline. What appears to have happened in some instances is that the historical verisimilitude of much of this seemingly realistic film was mistaken for historical veracity. To that we shall return shortly.

With these limitations in mind, we shall consider a small but representative sample of the most obvious errors and misconceptions which helped to shape critical opinion of *The Mission*. We shall begin with one of the first British reviews, namely that by Iain Johnstone in *The Sunday Times*. As indicated earlier, this critic thought Bolt's script embodied "pinpoint historical accuracy", although what Johnstone's justification for making that sweeping and most exacting assertion could be remains a mystery. According to the generally accepted epistemological norms of his society, it would be necessary for Johnstone to have a firm grasp of every historical detail on which *The Mission* touches before reaching such a conclusion. There is no apparent reason to believe, however, that he was thus prepared, and indeed several historical inaccuracies in the film diminish the cogency of his statement. Had Johnstone taken time to consult standard histories of the Society of Jesus, particularly its South American missions and their forced closure in the eighteenth century, he may have learnt, for example, that the central ecclesiastical figure in *The Mission*, Luis Altamirano, was not a cardinal whom the pope sent to South America to report on prospects for terminating the Jesuit missionary presence there, but a Jesuit priest, albeit a highly experienced one who knew much about relations between church and state in southern Europe, whom the general of the Society of Jesus dispatched to expedite the withdrawal of the Jesuits after it had been decided to close their fields. Of such other inaccuracies as the presence of a Guaraní Roman Catholic priest (when in fact none were ordained before the closure of the Jesuit fields) Johnstone appears to have been quite ignorant.

Several reviewers found Jeremy Irons's portrayal of Father Gabriel unconvincing, chiefly because they questioned whether a missionary priest in a Spanish colony of South America could have had such a serene disposition. In a related vein, Anthony Pagden chided the character for being reminiscent of an "English country parson". Much can be said against these critiques. To be sure, the Father Gabriel of the film is emphatically not the Father Gabriel of the novelisation. The occasionally militant Irish cleric whom Bolt created for the book becomes a generally irenic and idealistic man of God on the screen, but it should be borne in mind that even in the latter venue Father Gabriel reveals a capacity for anger as a normal secondary emotion. This comes to the fore especially during the hearing which Altamirano conducts in Asunción. Admittedly, these moderately eruptive scenes are exceptions. Nevertheless, to deny the cinematic character's plausibility merely because in most scenes he is particularly serene is arguably to parade one's ignorance of the broad spectrum of personality types found in the ranks of the Roman Catholic clergy. With regard to Pagden's comment about the seemingly English demeanour of Father Gabriel, one might also reply that there is no compelling reason why this priest in the film could not have been an Englishman who served in the Society of Jesus. After all, many have done so through the centuries, and as we noted in the foundational historical chapter of the present study Jesuit missionaries in the Spanish and Portuguese colonies of South America during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries came from European countries other than Spain and Portugal.

Another striking omission of many of the reviews in question is the apparent failure of certain critics to understand the pivotal centrality of some of the visual symbolism. To be sure, there are exceptions, such as Blake's comments about the metaphorical meaning of the Iguazu Falls. By contrast, there is virtually nothing in the extensive critical commentary on *The Mission* pertaining to something as obvious as Father Gabriel bearing the monstrance out of the burning chapel, a matter which Daniel Berrigan discussed at length in his published journal of the filming. This symbolic act not merely contradicts much of what some critics wrote about Father Gabriel's supposed lack of assertiveness but also forms a poignant spiritual bridge between the eighteenth-century episode and the contemporary relevance of the historic stand of the Jesuit missionaries on the side of the oppressed in Latin

America. Several reviewers seem to have noticed only the epilogue on the screen as a vehicle of this crucial message.

Much the same can be said of the failure of most critics to recognise or come to grips with the liberationist underpinnings of *The Mission*, notwithstanding the explicit attention which they had received in *inter alia* published interviews with Bolt and Joffé. This is particularly surprising in light of the attention which conflicts surrounding liberation theology, not least the confrontation between Leonardo Boff and the Vatican, were still receiving when *The Mission* was released. Apart from occasional - and usually flippant - references to the epilogue, very few reviewers mentioned the contemporary liberationist context and its resulting motifs at all.

Notes

1. David Robinson, "Pictorial splendours", *The Times* (London), 23 October 1986, p. 13.
2. Iain Johnstone, "The tribe God forgot", *The Sunday Times* (London), 26 October 1986, p. 46.
3. Anthony Pagden, "Above the falls", *The Times Literary Supplement* (London), 31 October 1986, p. 1220.
4. Margaret Walters, "Mission impossible", *The Listener*, CXVI, no. 2984 (30 October 1986), pp. 3-36.
5. Dirk Michiels, "La espada y la cruz", *Film en Televisie*, no. 354 (November 1986), p. 8.
6. Erwin Goegebeur, "La espada y la cruz", *Film en Televisie*, no. 354 (November 1986), p. 9.
7. Helena von Zweigbergk, "Svårsmält storfilm", *Chaplin*, XXVIII, no. 6 (1986), pp. 325-326.
8. Hanserik Hjertén, "Jesuitidyll som kväver", *Dagens Nyheter* (Stockholm), 12 December 1986, p. 26.
9. Derek Wilson, "The Mission is indeed magnificent", *Argus Tonight* (Cape Town), 30 January 1987, p. 12.
10. Peter Goldsmid, "Well done, Mister Joffé. *Mission* accomplished", *The Weekly Mail* (Johannesburg), 30 January - 5 February 1987, p. 20.
11. Jean-Jacques Cornish, "'Mission' Flawed by Obtrusive Motive of Story", *Pretoria News*, 4 February 1987, p. 3.
12. Richard A. Blake, "'The Mission': An Epic of the Soul", *America*, CLV, no. 14 (15 November 1986), pp. 302-304.
13. Tom O'Brien, "Public Introspection", *Commonweal*, CXIII, no. 20 (21 November 1986), p. 632.
14. David Neff, "The Sword and the Oboe", *Christianity Today*, XXX, no. 18 (12 December 1986), pp. 63-64.
15. J.M.W[all], "The Mission", *The Christian Century*, CIII, no. 40 (24-31 December 1986), pp. 1181-1182.

16. Harry Cheney, "Film Facts", *Christian Herald*, CX, no. 2 (February 1987), p. 35.
17. Stanley Kauffmann, "For God's Sake", *The New Republic*, no. 3750 (1 December 1986), pp. 26-27.
18. Vincent Canby, "Screen: 'The Mission,' With De Niro and Irons", *The New York Times*, 11 October 1986, p. C13.
19. Mario Grut, "Bra som resereklam", *Aftonbladet* (Stockholm), 12 December 1986, p. 27.
20. Michael Dempsey, "Light Shining in Darkness: Roland Joffe [sic] on *The Mission*", *Film Quarterly*, XL, no. 4 (Summer 1987), p. 3.
21. *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5, 8.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
24. Stephan Linnér, "Dandyn blir en gudsmän", *Kvällsposten* (Malmö), 13 December 1986), p. 4.
25. Nora Lee, "*The Mission*, a Film About Passion", *American Cinematographer*, LXVIII, no. 2 (February 1987), p. 32.
26. Robin Hanbury-Tenison (London) to *The Sunday Times*, undated, in *The Sunday Times*, 9 November 1986, p. 18.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

CONCLUSION

General Observations

At the outset of our journey through selected literary and cinematic portrayals of missions and missionaries, I stated that a central guiding hypothesis was that when literary artists and filmmakers have described Jesuit endeavours in South America during the eighteenth century they have almost invariably used this stormy chapter in ecclesiastical history as evidence to support whatever contemporary cause they were advocating. These campaigns have included *inter alia* suppression of the Society of Jesus, restoring the legal status of that religious order, proving the moral and economic demerits of imperialism, opposition to free trade, advocacy of socialism, resistance to fascism, and legitimising liberation theology. In our varying analyses of selected works by Voltaire, Cunninghame Graham, Hochwalder, Bolt, Joff , and Berrigan, I have demonstrated how these learned gentlemen elected to represent the Jesuit undertaking, especially the life of the *reducciones* and their forced closure, in ways which served their own political, economic, ideational, and religious agendas. The evidence of this, both direct and circumstantial, is overwhelming, and much of it has been cited at length in the present study. It would be superfluous to reproduce it here. In several of the preceding chapters, I have also drawn other conclusions about diverse aspects of the individual works considered, such as representations of indigenous peoples and the variety of stereotypes of missionaries which have evolved in the cinema.

Let us here make a preliminary statement about the overarching value of this investigation. A fundamental lesson to be learnt from such a study is that all representations of historical events must be regarded as interpretations. To be sure, this is hardly an Archimedean discovery which will prompt anyone with even a rudimentary grounding in the development of historiographical epistemology to shout "Eureka". As countless historians of the expansion of Christianity, like their secular counterparts, have understood for generations, there is no flawless conduit of truth between the phenomena of the past and perceptions of the present. Even when extensive pertinent documentation exists, such as statistics and other contempo-

rary accounts recorded by contemporary participants and observers, one must contend with a host of subjective factors which have left their mark on those witnesses, such as their general incompleteness, conscious or unconscious shaping of the material motivated by either wishful thinking of the rapid enlargement of Christendom or hostility to its proliferation, and the inevitable limitations of any one person's or group's viewpoint. The inherently cross-cultural nature of most foreign missionary endeavours obviously compounds these subjective factors and increases the refraction of the facts of the events under consideration as they emanate through various cultural prisms on their way to the eyes of subsequent readers.

If historians with few if any axes to grind who are willing and able to conduct extensive research in various written and other sources and who consciously seek to present comprehensive depictions of missions history to their readers inescapably leave their own fingerprints on their writing, the problems of subjectivity and incompleteness become all the more evident when historical topics are subjected to conscious artistic interpretation. To be sure, some playwrights, screenwriters, novelists, and other practitioners of the arts remain convinced that their task is to present realistic depictions to the viewers and readers of their works. The ideal of objectivity dies hard. But many others have concluded that their duty is consciously to portray reality as they themselves perceive it, realising that their interpretations almost inevitably differ from those of other artists, historians, or anyone else who may participate in similar exercises. Again, the present study underscores the apparent necessity of realising this limitation, with both the drawbacks and the insights it can bring to the interpretative task. With regard to the focal point of the subject we have been considering, it is possible to know much about the evangelisation of the Guaraní during the eighteenth century, the ways in which their *reducciones* functioned, the challenges which European colonialism posed to them, and the controversies attending the closure of this enormous missionary undertaking. What is much easier to know, however, is what its interpreters have wanted us to know about these matters.

Beyond these general observations about the inevitability of subjective input in the process of writing history and the proving of the central hypothesis of this thesis, it is possible to draw other conclusions about the subject matter and the

methodology employed. To them we shall turn before concluding with comments about the rôle of film in missiology and suggestions for future research on this topic.

The Artists and Their Causes

In retrospect, certain overarching traits about many of the *littérateurs* and filmmakers whose treatments of Jesuit missions in eighteenth-century South America we have considered emerge, some of them so vividly that they can hardly be overlooked. Furthermore, it is possible to draw at least tentative conclusions about their use of this chapter in ecclesiastical history. It must be admitted that our sample is statistically relatively small, and therefore generalisations must be made cautiously.

First, it is striking that from theological and ecclesiastical viewpoints none of the principal men under consideration, with the obvious exception of Daniel Berrigan, S.J., was what one would regard as a likely champion of the Society of Jesus. For that matter, only Berrigan appears to have been a practising Roman Catholic at the time he wrote about this missionary endeavour. Most, in fact, stood spiritually and theologically far from the mainstream of that denominational tradition. Voltaire was an Enlightenment Deist who at times thrust his satirical rapier at the Church of Rome. Apart from his obvious admiration of the economic life of the *reducciones*, Cunninghame Graham evinced little interest in religious matters, notwithstanding his mother's Hispanic origins and his decades of involvement in that culture on both sides of the Atlantic. Hochwälder was a Jew, albeit one from the predominantly Roman Catholic city of Vienna. Bolt, by his own testimony, had been raised a Methodist but never set foot in a church as an adult and eventually appears to have given up whatever belief in God he once had. Yet they all found something fascinating about an epoch in Jesuit history, and they all wrote enthusiastically about it; even Voltaire, despite the volleys he had fired across the Jesuit bow in *Candide*, later changed his position to one of praise. The ability of the Society of Jesus, which has been spected of all manner of dastardly deeds, loathed in many quarters, subjected to immeasurable calumny for centuries, and at one time or another banned in many countries from Norway¹ to Argentina, to garner such accolades for its missionary endeavours from these unlikely supporters is truly remarkable.

One reason for this is undoubtedly political. All of these same men were, in one sense or another, political nonconformists who protested against totalitarian or conservative governments. Voltaire was a loose cannon on the deck of the *ancien régime*. Cunninghame Graham became a socialist Labourite who denounced Conservative and Liberal governments alike during the Victorian and Edwardian eras. Hochwälder opposed National Socialism which had seized power in his native land during the late 1930s and was tearing Europe asunder after he fled to Switzerland. Bolt's socialist and pacifist views and activism were out of step with prevailing British policies during the Cold War. Berrigan was also a pacifist who had gained considerable renown in the United States of America because of his outspoken opposition to that country's military involvement in South-east Asia during the 1960s and early 1970s. The red thread does not stop there. Three of these figures (Cunninghame Graham, Bolt, and Berrigan) had been clapped into gaol because of their political activities, while two others (Voltaire and Hochwälder) had gone into exile because they feared persecution at the hands of undemocratic governments. Generally speaking, they all sought to act as spokesmen for economically, ethnically, or politically oppressed peoples.

Against this background, it becomes more evident how these reform-minded individuals apparently felt an affinity with eighteenth-century Jesuits who similarly found themselves at odds with entrenched structures of economic and political power while seeking to protect the lives and freedom of colonised and exploited people. Although these men of letters lacked anything remotely approaching a comprehensive grasp of the history of Jesuit missionary endeavours, they became aware through reading and other means of the controversy surrounding the heavy-handed closure of the *reducciones* in the 1760s. This chapter in the history of the Society of Jesus, intersecting with the vicious and exploitative annals of Iberian imperialism in South America, clearly struck a familiar chord which, *mutatis mutandis*, seemed analogous to what they were experiencing in their own times. Most of their representations (or, arguably, inevitable misrepresentations) of eighteenth-century Jesuit missions consequently stress the benevolently anti-imperial, and in places almost idyllic, side of what was undeniably a much more complicated picture.

This is not to suggest, of course, that the history of the Society of Jesus furnishes rhetorical ammunition only for reformers of "liberal" or nonconformist

inclination. That religious order, it must be remembered, played a vital rôle in reversing reformist tendencies within the Roman Catholic Church both during the era of the Counter-Reformation and subsequently, and both priests and laymen in its broad, international ranks have represented a fairly wide spectrum of theological and political opinion. It is entirely conceivable that various champions of "conservatism" could with equal sincerity take from Jesuit history evidence in support of, for example, their defences of Roman Catholic orthodoxy, persecution of Protestantism, papal prerogative, a symbiosis of church and state, royalism, centralisation of ecclesiastical authority, *laissez-faire* capitalism, and strict educational policies. For that matter, Jesuit missions history itself is a variegated saga which could yield support for some of these causes. As I have indicated earlier, the Jesuit missionaries in question cannot be categorically classified as radical ecclesiastical reformers or innovators. By most accounts they administered their *reducciones* with a heavy hand and, in part by keeping the priesthood and most secular leadership in their own hands, created a situation which did not survive their withdrawal. Little of this, however, comes to the fore in most of the works examined in this study. Indeed, in what may have been an unintentional inversion of history, Bolt wrote a Guaraní priest into his script for *The Mission*.

An Auspicious Method of Analysis?

A central purpose of this study was to examine and identify how literary and cinematic artists have portrayed eighteenth-century Jesuit missions to the Guaraní and to demonstrate how they had used this critical chapter in ecclesiastical history, especially the life and forced closure of the *reducciones*, as historical evidence in support of contemporary causes. Employing what for many decades have been fairly conventional modes of historical and literary criticism, I first commented on each author under consideration, basing my remarks on standard biographical sources in English, German, and French, highlighting some of the most salient political, economic, or other concerns expressed in his writing and other public activities in general, and then proceeded to correlate elements in his text about Jesuit missions to those concerns. Examination of such related matters as depictions of colonists

and indigenous peoples complemented this task. Given the focus on the film *The Mission*, it seemed particularly relevant to place that work into the context of earlier cinematic depictions of missionaries and their work in the propagation of Christianity. In the special case of Daniel Berrigan, I modified my approach slightly by beginning with a consideration of his remarkable career as a Jesuit priest and anti-war activist before exploring how, as revealed in his published diary, he accordingly influenced the revision of Bolt's script for *The Mission* while serving as a special advisor to director Roland Joffé.

In retrospect, implementing this general strategy and executing the processes it entailed proved fairly uncomplicated. Much is known about all the writers considered, so establishing the contours of their pertinent thought on such matters as imperialism and complementing them with corresponding details of their political activities did not pose a daunting task. By the same token, much of what they committed to paper about the Jesuits and their *reducciones* stands out in bold relief, and its prominence was not difficult to comprehend in light of their ideologies and other beliefs and convictions. Attainment of the goal of proving the foundational hypothesis was thus not particularly complex. There can be little doubt that the images which the authors in question have given the world about Jesuit missions in eighteenth-century South America must all be taken *cum grano salis* and can also be understood in light of the authors' contemporary interests.

Two vital and intimately linked questions remain: How much insight do literary and cinematic works, more specifically those which focus on eighteenth-century Jesuit missions, nevertheless actually shed on the historical phenomena they purport to depict? To what extent do they intentionally or unintentionally distort them? It would not be mere cynicism to reply that all art is by nature artificial and that no medium is a perfect conduit of truth. A less crass and potentially more valuable answer might be that the present study has uncovered crucial flaws, omissions, and exaggerations in all the works examined and that many of these stem quite directly from authorial exploitation of history. Consequently, anyone seriously interested in gaining a more comprehensive and hopefully less erroneous image of the history of the Jesuit *reducciones* without necessarily learning Spanish as well as the other languages which were spoken at them and in which memoirs by participating missionaries were written and reading a massive amount of primary

documents should at least seek to uncover basic information about the biases and agendas of the authors whose secondary works are serving as channels of information. Furthermore, the present study underscores the desirability of availing oneself to several such books, films, or whatever media are accessible. Of course, there is nothing particularly novel about this, but in the context of historical-missiological enquiry it seems worth emphasising.

On a larger scale, the matter becomes particularly problematical, because some late twentieth-century literary theoreticians have postulated that historical fiction is a valid source, one which opens a revealing window on events of the past. Others, particularly conventional historians, have repeatedly expressed scepticism in this regard. In one recent exchange which illustrates the point, Dr Michael Green of the Department of English at the University of Natal has championed the value and legitimacy of fiction as historiography and cited Oliver Walker's novels about the polygamous British colonist in Natal, John Dunn, *Proud Zulu* and *Zulu Royal Feather* in support of this contention, while Dr Charles Ballard, who then lectured in the Department of History at the same institution and had written a praiseworthy doctoral thesis about Dunn, took the opposite view.²

As indicated in the introductory chapter of the present thesis, as a historian I unabashedly have a personal and professional bias towards conventional historiography, at least when it rests on extensive examination of sources as close as possible to the events under consideration. Concomitantly, while as a literary scholar I deeply respect the potential which literature (and, by extension, the cinema) has for conveying truth, motivating readers and viewers, and, not least, entertaining - all of which, to be sure, can hold true for conventional historiography. Furthermore, as I am keenly aware of much of the subjectivity and fallibility which inheres in the writing of history, I stressed in that opening chapter that in this study the portrayal of Jesuit missions in history books would not serve as a touchstone with which to assay the same in various literary and cinematic nuggets, at least not in any categorical sense. Without compromising that principle, I cautiously suggest that one can learn considerably more about Jesuit missions to the Guaraní in general from a work such as Cunninghame Graham's *A Vanished Arcadia*, notwithstanding its author's unvarnished bias, than from any of the others I have analysed in the preceding chapters. That Scottish *hidalgo*, after all, did vastly more research on

the topic than did, for example, Hochwalder or Bolt, and while Cunninghame Graham can be justifiably indicted for allowing his political agenda to dictate part of what he wrote, the same charge can be brought against the other authors.

It would be immeasurably helpful, of course, to have eighteenth-century Guaran testimonies about the *reducciones*, the Jesuits' propagation of Christianity at them, and numerous related matters. As indicated in the introductory chapter, in recent decades historians of missions have sought, albeit with varying degrees of success, to add the voices of those being evangelised to the vast documentation left by those who have done the evangelising. When available, this material can add an invaluable dimension to historical research. In most instances, however, it is sparse, and with regard to contacts between the Guaran and their colonisers, including the Jesuit missionaries, it appears to be virtually non-existent. Again, this inevitably adds a bias to the historical literature as well as to artistic representations which rely on that literature.

It is arguable, as is often the case when an inductive method is employed, that the sample of texts examined is not necessarily representative of what exists. That eventuality is readily granted. It is entirely conceivable that an analysis of other texts, perhaps ones in languages not accessible for the purposes of the present study, or by Jesuits themselves (besides Daniel Berrigan) or by people whose political ideologies were more conservative than those considered here would yield less blatant exploitation of Jesuit history or otherwise call for conclusions markedly different from my own. An awareness of this possibility suggests that the conclusions drawn here about my selection of texts taken from three major European languages and written over a period of more than two centuries should not be regarded as the final word about literary and other representations of the work of the Society of Jesus amongst the Guaran.

Perhaps in the end it would be fair to conclude that much of the value of artistic depictions of the Jesuits and their *reducciones* lies much less in their general portrayal of this epic (which, to be fair to them, they were generally not attempting) but rather, in a piecemeal way, in their calling attention to particular issues, some of which are of great missiological or other interest. To illustrate the point, to view the film *The Mission* intending thereby to gain even a superficial grasp of the history of the endeavours of Society of Jesus to bring Christianity to the Guaran would

be an exercise in futility. (In this regard, it might be recalled that one criticism which reviewers brought against *The Mission* was that it sought to some degree to do that.) One could learn more in that sense from reading a book like Cunningham-Graham's *A Lost Arcadia*. On the other hand, Bolt, Joffé, Berrigan, and the other creators of that film arguably succeeded in highlighting vital issues involved in the closure of the *reducciones* and the issue of justifying violence by missionaries when they and people whom they are seeking to protect are subjected to violence by the state. Erwin Goegebeur, the Dutch critic who reviewed *The Mission* in the periodical *Film en Televisie*, was essentially correct in categorising it as a "discussie-film" rather than a historical documentary.

The Cinema and the Future of the Gospel

Turning from retrospection to speculation about the future, it can be argued that our consideration of the film *The Mission* highlights the continuing potential of the cinema as a means of communicating missiological concerns in the twenty-first century. That award-winning work briefly captured the attention of tens of millions of viewers after its premiere in 1986. To be sure, its production was an expensive, arduous, and time-consuming undertaking, but at least in terms of quantitative public response *The Mission* was arguably more cost-effective in reaching people than are most sermons, evangelistic tracts, or other uses of the various media which religious organisations have long employed. Explicit visual imagery has generally surpassed that stimulated by the printed word in its effect on the broad public during an age in which some social commentators and authorities in the field of mass communications have expressed great concern about the constriction of effective literacy.³

Not that there is anything novel about this suggestion. For decades missionary organisations, boards of Christian education, and other agencies have understood something of the value of audio-visual materials, chiefly documentaries lacking widespread appeal, to serve their ends. Similarly, Christian commentaries on films have long been profuse. The columns of such periodicals as *The Christian Century*, *Christianity Today*, and *Christian Herald*, to cite three of the most popular religious

periodicals in North America, have carried hundreds of reviews through the years, and one could point to corresponding criticism in other parts of the world, though admittedly not everywhere. Much less frequently, Christians have ventured out on the thin ice of making feature films, and on occasion the results they have seen from their efforts have been profoundly gratifying. After playing the Dutch Christian Corrie ten Boom who strove to shield Jews from Nazi persecution during the Second World War in the 1975 production of *The Hiding Place*, for example, Jeannette Clift George "received letters from Christians whose fellowship with God had become dramatically personalized, missionaries who were called into service, and believers in oppressive countries who found the courage of God" as a consequence of viewing that cinematic testimony to a humble woman's faith.⁴ Two decades later, the American feature film *Dead Man Walking* gained international attention as a powerful portrayal of the ministry of the Roman Catholic nun Helen Prejean to a murderer on death row. In this regard, however, the potential for missiology remains largely unrealised. For the most part, the cinematic portrayal of missions and missionaries has been left to commercial interests. The result, as we saw in Chapter Six, has been a series of stereotypes - most of them derogatory and some of them arguably sensationalised and even bizarre - of missionaries and their work. One can point to a few exceptions, such as *Romero*, a film not discussed at length in this study, which the Roman Catholic Church in the United States of America produced to provide insight into the difficulties which Christians were experiencing at the hands of a right-wing dictatorship in El Salvador. As usual, however, the exception proves the rule.

The challenges of this should not be underestimated. One of the most daunting obstacles, of course, is the enormous cost. Less tangibly, there is the omnipresent issue of how films of missiological import will be perceived. Our survey of the reception of *The Mission* in several countries and by people representing numerous denominational traditions revealed a distinct tendency for critics to bury or praise it according to such factors as their own theological and other religious presuppositions, ideological leanings, and artistic prejudices. Some reviewers, for that matter, simply misunderstood vital points in *The Mission*. To this it might be answered that the presentation of the Gospel through sermons, tracts, books, television, or other media has met with mixed responses for nearly two millennia and any

expectations that placing considerably greater emphasis on films would alter that are naïve. In all times and places of a dynamic and ever-evolving world, the Gospel should be communicated in meaningful and credible forms, and those who hear it will have the choice of accepting or rejecting it. Moreover, their perceptions of the Gospel will inevitably vary.

Finally, the direct pedagogical value in missiology of the films we have considered or to which reference has been made in this study deserves mention. Teachers of religious studies have long been cognizant of the potential which such films as *King of Kings* and *The Robe* have for illustrating the subjective, eisegetical nature of twentieth-century portrayals of Jesus, however irritating those works are to many New Testament scholars. By approximate analogy, such films as *The Mission*, *Romero*, *At Play in the Fields of the Lord*, and *Hawaii* can be put to use in at least two ways. On the one hand, some of them highlight quite clearly such central issues as the contextualising of the Gospel in cross-cultural settings and consequences of the failure to do so, relations between church and state, the creation of indigenous churches, and the confrontation of Christianity and other religions. On the other hand, they illustrate no less vividly how both advocates of Christian missions and people who are either opposed or indifferent thereto have invariably depicted aspects of the subject to serve their own ends.

Notes

1. Norway's first constitution, which was promulgated in 1814 after the Treaty of Kiel compelled Denmark to cede that country to a personal union with Sweden, explicitly forbade the entry of Jesuits into the realm. This ban was not lifted until well into the twentieth century.
2. Michael Green, "History in Fiction: Oliver Walker and John Dunn", *English in Africa*, XV, no. 1 (May 1988), pp. 29-53.
3. See, for example, Neil Postman's *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1985), in which he explicitly laments the replacement of the Age of Typography by the Age of Television during the second half of the twentieth century.
4. Jeannette Clift George, "Prometheus Unbound: Unleashing Christian Drama", *Christianity and the Arts*, IV, no. 1 (February-April 1997), p. 10.

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