

6 THE *MISSIO DEI* AS THE *OPERA DEI PERSONALIA*: THE TRINITY IN THE THEOLOGY MÍGUEZ BONINO

Theologically we must dig even deeper; we must trace out the originating impulse in faith in the triune God; from that standpoint alone can we see the missionary enterprise synoptically in its relationship to the Kingdom of God in its relationship to the World. (1997:138 quoting Andersen 1955:10)

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Although Míguez Bonino is a truly trinitarian theologian, the doctrine of the Trinity has not been central to his thought until relatively recently. His theology has always been Christocentric but he has not articulated the meaning of the relationships between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in his theology. In the mid nineteen-eighties he began to reflect more seriously on the importance of this doctrine; this study now turns to Trinitarian doctrine in his theology.

Míguez Bonino's focus upon trinitarian theology does not mean that he has abandoned his theological methodology described in chapter three. His point of departure is still missionary obedience and his aim is still missionary effectiveness. His reflections on the Trinity fit into that hermeneutical framework.

Additionally, Míguez Bonino's use of the motifs of Kingdom of God and church, described in chapters four and five respectively have not been discarded. The aim of his reflections upon the Trinity is to deepen and strengthen the understanding of mission gained from the church and Kingdom of God motifs. The chapter will especially highlight how he has gone about this task.

Furthermore, Míguez Bonino has deepened his reflections upon *missio Dei* by exploring the missionary implications of *opera Dei personalia*.¹ Although, he does not use this term, it will become clear that the concept is strong in his theology. It is not only the actions of God but also the triune being of God—the very life of God—that has occupied Míguez Bonino's missionary reflections. Although his theology is fundamentally praxis orientated, this does not push him into pragmatism; he believes that it is God's person and not only God's action that should be the originating impulse for Christian life and witness. In the same way, he looks to the church's being, not only its action, as a vital theme for missionary theology; in the words of Leslie Newbigin, the church's missionary dimension as well as the missionary intension is important (Newbigin 1958: 21, 43).

Finally, this chapter will not focus so much on how Míguez Bonino *has understood* each person of the Trinity but *rather how he* has understood the relationships between the members of the Trinity and how that affects Christian life

¹ The term *opera Dei personalia* is used to express working of the inner life of the Trinity or the very life of God as it operates within the Godhead.

and mission. This is important to understand, especially in regard to the second person in relation to the first and third. A study of Míguez Bonino's understanding of the second person in the theology of Míguez Bonino would require a dissertation in itself.

6.2 DEVELOPMENTS IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

This section deals with developments in trinitarian theology in the twentieth century; specifically as they relate to mission studies. The Trinity, so important to patristic scholars, had a brief revival in the Reformation period but lost importance after the Enlightenment. Nineteenth century and early twentieth century theology, assumed the veracity of Immanuel Kant's famous dictum that the doctrine of the Trinity adds nothing worthwhile to practical life (Thompson 1994:3; cf. Kant 1992).

In the mid-twentieth century trinitarian theology experienced a renaissance. There were many attempts, in almost every theological movement to articulate Trinitarian doctrine in their own terms. David Cunningham lists twenty-one introductions, technical treatments or advanced studies published on the doctrine of the Trinity during the last two decades of the twentieth century (Cunningham 1998:339-342). He comments that there are so many books still being published on the subject that the renaissance of Trinitarian theology is in danger of becoming a bandwagon (Cunningham 1998:19).

In spite of the renaissance of interest in the doctrine of the Trinity its significance for mission is a subject that rarely appears in modern theologies. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen (2004), in his global introduction to the doctrine of God, does not have a section dealing with the Trinity and mission. Alister E. McGrath does not make any reference to mission in his section on the doctrine of the Trinity (McGrath 1998:247-269). The same could be said for theological dictionaries (cf. Jensen 2000). John Thompson (1994) asserts that 'it can scarcely be said that the theology of mission has been a predominant feature of modern theological writing, much less a theology based on the Trinity (Thompson 1994:68). However, he goes on to say that since the breakdown of the *Corpus Christianum*, there has been a considerable amount of reflection upon the Trinity and its significance for the nature and goal of mission.

It was the magisterial figure of Karl Barth who re-established the Trinity as the most profound article of the Christian faith and opened the way for a trinitarian missiology. Thomas F. Torrance and Geoffrey W. Bromiley declared that *Church Dogmatics*, I/1, was the greatest treatise on the Trinity, not only since the Reformation but since Augustine. (Barth 1975:ix). Barth recovered the 'one-ness' and 'three-ness' of God based upon God's Self-Revelation through the message of God's saving and redeeming activity in Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Torrance, in a later book, makes the striking statement that Barth restored 'express knowledge of the Holy Trinity to its place in the centre of the Church's faith and worship not unlike the place given to it in the great Nicene theology and liturgy of the Early Church' (Torrance 1996:9). In the Roman Catholic Church, Karl Rahner developed a parallel understanding of the Trinity in the framework of the mystery of salvation. He brought together the contrasting approaches of Augustinian and Thomist theologies into an understanding based on the three-fold communication of God (cf.

Moltmann 1980:144). Both Barth and Rahner did much to reintroduce the doctrine of the Trinity as crucial to the understanding and development of the doctrines of the incarnation and salvation.

Barth's emphasis on the connection between the Trinity to the doctrine of salvation had profound effects upon mission studies. In Conciliar Protestantism, this can be observed in a paper given by Barth at the Brandenburg Missionary Conference (1932) (Bosch 1991:389). The concept was also taken up by the German delegation to the Tambaram meeting of the IMC (1938), which proposed that God's Kingdom would be consummated not by the missionary activity of the church but an act of the grace of God. This shift is also perceived in Johannes H. Bavinck's *The Impact of Christianity on the Non-Christian World* (Bavinck 1949), where he calls for a trinitarian understanding of mission rather than an ecclesiocentric one. It was, however, the Willingen meetings of the IMC (1952) that concretized this move in Conciliar Protestantism. Although the term was not used, the idea of the *missio Dei* found expression. The report stated radically that: 'there is no participation in Christ without participation in His mission to the world. That by which the Church receives its existence is that by which it is also given its world mission' (IMC 1952:2-3). The very nature of being Christian is inextricably linked to the mission of Christ in the world. The church's mission was seen in the light of God's action. Willingen adopted the statement declaring that the missionary calling of the church is to be sent by God to carry out God's work to the ends of the earth. Not ecclesiology or soteriology but God's nature and action are the source of the church's mission. The report of Commission I of the Willingen Conference which was concerned with the Biblical and theological bases of the missionary obligation of the church, grounded the mission of the church in the outgoing activity of God. 'Missionary theology, centred upon the reconciling action of the Triune God, is not a compound of formulae but a living way of thinking about and understanding the life of the church and the world' (Shivute 1980:116). In a report written after Willingen, Karl Hartenstein defined mission as 'the participation in the sending of the Son, in the *missio Dei*, with an all inclusive aim of establishing the lordship of Christ over the whole redeemed creation' (Freitag, Hartenstein and Lehmann 1952:54 quoted in Bassham 1979:67-68 Italics in original). According to Gerald H. Anderson, the church's mission should be seen from the perspective of a 'radical Trinitarian theocentrism' (Anderson 1961:15). Finally, Wilhelm Andersen stated:

A theological redefinition of the basis of the Christian missionary enterprise cannot be worked out within the limits of the phrase "the missionary obligation of the Church"...we must dig deeper; we must trace the originating impulse in faith in the triune God; from that standpoint alone can we see the missionary enterprise synoptically in its relationship to the Kingdom of God and its relationship to the world (Andersen 1955:10).

In regard to one of the most important international theological forums in which Míguez Bonino took part over the years, the Faith and Order Commission has done relatively little work directly on Trinitarian doctrine. It was only in 1996 that FO published their commentary on the Nicene Creed (FO 1996). Subsequent to 1974, the WCC began to facilitate consultations and seminars on mission with the Orthodox Churches. There can be little doubt that their contribution has made trinitarian doctrine more important within the council's theological reflections. The most important of those contributions took place in Neapolis, Greece in 1988 with

sixty Eastern and Oriental Orthodox representatives, eleven years after Míguez Bonino's direct involvement in FO ended. It was important because the keynote address affirmed that mission is participation in the very life of the Holy Trinity (cf. Scherer and Bevans 1992:232-241, esp. 235-236).²

In the Roman Catholic Church, the doctrine of the Trinity has always been assumed. Following Western theology³ it emphasised the unity of the Godhead rather than the individual persons of the Trinity. Following the developments in Conciliar Protestantism, the Second Vatican Council related mission to the Trinity through the concept of salvation history. Mission was still very much related to the Church but it is God who initiates, realises and guides mission. The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (LG) understands the constitution of the church to be trinitarian. 'Thus, the Church has been seen as "a people made one with the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit"(LG4). And then it declares that God makes a covenant with Israel for the benefit of all nations (LG9).

The Declaration on Mission, *Ad Gentes*, (AG) says:

The Church on earth is by its very nature missionary since, according to the plan of the Father, it has its origin in the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit. This plan flows from "fountain-like love," the love of God the Father, as the principle without principle from whom the Son is generated and from whom the Holy Spirit proceeds through the Son. (AG, 2)

God's great and merciful kindness creates humanity and calls it to share in the life and glory of the Trinity. God's divine goodness is constantly poured out so that God will at last become 'all in all' (1 Corinthians 15:28). In this way God's glory and humanity's happiness are assured.

It is notable that AG declares that the missionary activity of God does not begin with redemption but creation. Humanity is called to unity with God in its life and glory; this is done through the 'fountain-like-love' and divine goodness which issues incessantly from God in order that this double aim of God plan—the glory of God and the joy of humanity—are achieved.

The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes* (GS), deepens this understanding pneumatologically when it affirms that since Christ died for all, and since all are in fact 'called to one and the *same destiny*, which is divine, we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God, in the paschal mystery'. (GS, 22) The influence of the Spirit is deepened in what might be called the 'secular' dimension when it asserts that: 'the Spirit of God, who, with wondrous providence, directs the course of time and renews the face of the earth' (GS, 26).

Jürgen Moltmann, who has been a friend of Míguez Bonino since the mid-nineteen seventies, and has become a foil to many Latin American theologians, has developed a Trinitarian understanding which has been influential. The trinitarian motif is assumed, rather than explicit in *A Theology of Hope* (1967). He does, however, take Barth to task over his understanding of the immanent Trinity, believing that in Barth, the history of Jesus Christ is made to be the revelation of

² The keynote speech was given by Greek Orthodox Anastasios of Androussa (Yannoulatos). He was one of the earliest participants of the Eastern Orthodox in the WCC and, at the time, a moderator of CWME.

³ Western theology (Augustinian and Thomist) as opposed to Eastern Theology (Athanasian).

eternity rather than the revelation of the future. Moltmann is concerned that the use of terms such as the ‘pure presence of God’, an ‘eternal presence of God in time’, or a ‘present without any future’, make God’s revelation “atemporal” rather than orientated towards the future. Even here, Moltmann’s development of the Trinity as process open to the future is seen in seminal form (Moltmann 1967:50-58). The focus upon the cross of Christ in *The Crucified God* (1974) drove Moltmann to examine the relationship between Father and Son. Although he does not explicitly state this, Moltmann seems to say that, in the Christ event, God became Trinity. In *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (1977), however, Moltmann seems to return to an understanding of the existence of the immanent Trinity original to God, prior to history. In the section ‘The Church in the Trinitarian History of God’ (Moltmann 1977:50-65), Moltmann wants to see the economic Trinity as open in front and behind to the immanent Trinity. The trinitarian history of God is understood through the missions of the Son and Spirit and, therefore, only through the inference of the ‘Trinity in the Sending’ (economic Trinity) to the ‘Trinity in the Origin’ (immanent Trinity) can humanity, in the Christ event and in the experience of the Holy Spirit, be sure that it is God whom it is treating. In *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*, (1980), Moltmann is keen to unpack the claim he made in *The Crucified God*, that the doctrine of the Trinity has important implications for practical social and political life. His premise in this book is that the relationships of the Trinity are ‘relationships of fellowship and are open to the world’ (Moltmann 1980:64) and that the ultimate aim of this is freedom in the Kingdom of the Trinity. Freedom means the unrestricted participation in the eternal life of the triune God and in that fullness and glory inherent to the Trinity. Paraphrasing Augustine he concludes that: ‘our hearts are captive until they become free in the glory of the triune God’ (Moltmann 1980:222).

Various Latin American theologians have attempted to seriously treat the topic of the Trinity. Five works will be mentioned as inspirations, rather than sources of Míguez Bonino’s trinitarian reflections. Published a year before Gustavo Gutiérrez’ *A Theology of Liberation* (1973),⁴ Juan Luis Segundo’s *A Theology for Artisans of a New Humanity* (1974)⁵ drew attention to the importance of the implications of the doctrine of the Trinity for the practical implications of life in a secular and oppressive world. Especially important in this book is chapter two where Segundo sees God as *society* (*Segundo 1974:66*) and more substantially in chapter three where Segundo reflects on the danger of modalism (Segundo 1974: 98-111). His answer to modalism is to understand the Trinity as the hypostasis of persons (Segundo 1974: 111). God is primarily to be understood as person; but a person in community. The *personhood* of God ontologically precedes the personhood of other human beings; that is human beings are persons because God is person. However, epistemologically the personhood of other human beings precedes the personhood of God; that is the experience of God as person is mediated through the personhood of others from within community. Therefore, people can only truly encounter God from within community (cf. Segundo 1974: 115).

Written after Leonardo Boff was silenced by the Vatican, *Trinity and Society* (1988)⁶ is a significant book in Latin American theology’s attempt to seriously treat the issue of the Trinity in the context of Latin America. Taking the

⁴ Originally published in Spanish in 1971.

⁵ Originally published as, *Teología abierta para el laico adulto*, (1970). See especially volume 3.

⁶ Originally published as *A Trindade, a Sociedade e a Libertação* (1987)

context of suffering and oppression and the struggle for liberation as his starting point, this book is a systematic treatment of the topic of the Trinity. He discusses the heresies, historical controversies and images of the Trinity. His main thesis is that the perichoretic life of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit forms the model for human life and community: 'the basis for social and integral liberation' (Boff 1988:123ff). He describes the Father as 'the origin and goal of all liberation;' (Boff 1988:155ff) the Son as 'the mediator of integral liberation;' (Boff 1988:178ff) and the Holy Spirit as 'the driving force of liberation' (Boff 1988:189ff).

Gustavo Gutiérrez' *The God of Life* (1991)⁷ is also important for its trinitarian reflections. Gutiérrez answers three basic trinitarian questions (Gutiérrez 1991:xviii). To the question, what is God, he answers that God is the friend of life who liberates from oppression; God is the Holy God who does justice for the poor and is angry at sin; God is the faithful God who makes and keeps the covenant; God is the God who opposes the idolatry that brings death (Gutiérrez 1991:1-67). To the question, where is God, he answers that God is the God who comes to this world in the shape of a poor child; God is the one who lives out the justice of God for all nations; and God is the one who preaches justice and empowers the givers of life (Gutiérrez 1991:69-139). Finally, to the question, how are we to speak of God, he answers: through inspiration of the Holy Spirit, as in the lives and words of Jeremiah, Job and Mary (Gutiérrez 1991:141-186).

In *The God of Christians* (1991),⁸ Ronaldo Muñoz, takes the way of life and struggle of the poor as his starting point. He notes that the way that they experience urbanisation and exploitation helps them to have a true image of their God (Muñoz 1991:37ff). Within this context Muñoz examines both Old and New Testaments to draw out and articulate this image. He sees God as the God who faithfully demonstrates love towards the people of Israel, seeking justice on behalf of the poor and oppressed (Muñoz 1991:108ff). Jesus Christ discloses God as a loving Father, who discloses the nature of the Kingdom, and witnesses to himself as eternal Son (Muñoz 1991:130ff).

Guillermo Hansen, an Argentinean Lutheran and a colleague of Míguez Bonino at ISEDET, wrote his PhD dissertation on 'the Doctrine of the Trinity and Liberation Theology: A Study of the Trinitarian Doctrine and its place in Latin American Liberation Theology' (Hansen 1994). His most important contribution to Míguez Bonino's work is on the issue of synergism and enhypostasis. These will be mentioned later.

6.3 MAIN PUBLICATIONS

Míguez Bonino connects the Trinity with both theology and mission. Three of his writings provide us with his thinking on this. The major primary source is *Faces of Latin American Protestantism* (1997a), which is the product of the 1993 Carnahan Lectures given at ISEDET.⁹ Míguez Bonino treats the study of the Trinity in detail in the last two chapters. He examines this doctrine in two directions. Firstly, the function of the Trinity is a 'Hermeneutical Criterion,' in the search for theological

⁷ Originally published as *Dios de la vida*, (1989)

⁸ Originally published as *Dios de los Cristianos* (1987)

⁹ First published as *Rostros del Protestantismo Latinoamericano*, (1995).

coherence. Secondly, he proposes that Mission should be understood as ‘the Material Principle of a Latin American Protestant theology’. Consequently, for Latin America to move forward coherently in mission and in its thinking about mission (theology) there is a need for a Trinitarian missiology. This book will form the overarching framework of this chapter.

A complementary writing is a paper given at a conference on the influence of Wesley and Wesleyan theology around the world. In ‘Wesley in Latin America: A Theological and Historical Reflection’ (1998f), Míguez Bonino shows how the work of Wesley was introduced to Latin American Protestantism and then, in the light of the Latin American reality, how Wesleyan theology can contribute to Latin American theology. Especially important is a trinitarian understanding of grace.

Another contribution is a lecture given at a conference on the theology of John Wesley. It is entitled ‘Salvation as the Work of the Trinity: An attempt at a Holistic Understanding from a Latin American Perspective,’(1999i) and has tried to broaden the understanding of salvation by removing it from its purely Christological framework and setting it in a trinitarian perspective.

6.4 MISSIO DEI AND OPERA DEI PERSONALIA IN TRINITARIAN MISSIONARY THEOLOGY

6.4.1 *Presence and Absence of the Trinity in Theological Reflections*

Míguez Bonino has paid more attention to the doctrine of the Trinity during the latter part of his career. Earlier, the Trinity as a theological theme of reflection hardly appears. Evidence of this can be found in the fact that in the Argentinean Lutheran, Guillermo Hansen’s enormous thesis on the doctrine of the Trinity and Liberation Theology (1994), he has no section dealing specifically with Míguez Bonino’s understanding of the Trinity. His bibliography mentions very few of Míguez Bonino’s writings and none of which refer specifically to the Trinity.

Furthermore, Míguez Bonino seems to *ignore* the doctrine of the Trinity even when it would have been a relevant concept to apply to a specifically missionary question. A clear example of this is in the section discussing God’s nature in *Room to be People* (1979h). He calls into question the common belief that God is the one who is alone. He calls this ‘the greatest heresy, the biggest lie.’ He asserts that ‘God is precisely the one who is never alone, the one who has never wanted to be alone’ (1979h:15). It seems obvious that the doctrine of the Trinity would form part of a strong rebuttal of that belief. Instead, Míguez Bonino emphasises that God, in creation, invites humanity to be with God in the construction of a just society, and that God is the God for others. Míguez Bonino does not develop the doctrine of the Trinity at all. This may have been because the context was not conducive to a discussion on the doctrine of the Trinity—evangelistic discussions in a middle class church in the seventies--but as a central tenet of the faith, it seems as if it would have been relevant.

6.4.2 *Theological Reductionism: The stated context of Trinitarian Missionary Theology*

Míguez Bonino's later writings that begin to deal with the doctrine of the Trinity are all written in the context of reflection on the contemporary state of Latin American Protestantism. Specifically, they highlight how the theology and mission of those churches can be sharpened and deepened through a reflection on the Trinity. This is clearly illustrated in *Faces of Latin American Protestantism* (1997) where, Míguez Bonino describes and analyses what he calls the four faces of Latin American Protestantism—the Liberal face, the Evangelical face, the Pentecostal Face and the Ethnic face.¹⁰ He traces the entrance of each of the Protestant traditions into Latin America; how each tradition developed—historically and theologically—and the influence that each of them had on the Latin American church scene.

He is convinced that the responsibility of the Latin American Protestant churches, 'whatever its place might be in Latin American Religious life, is to offer a faithful witness to the gospel, which will be measured by its faithfulness in the propagation of the gospel, faithfulness in life and action, and faithfulness in the celebration—that is, its evangelisation, its praxis and worship' (1997a:111). One cannot sustain faithfulness in these areas without a missional theological reflection.

The problem Míguez Bonino observes is that Latin American Protestantism tends to exhibit a reductionist theology, rather than, no theology at all. Almost all theology has been reduced to Christology and Christology is swallowed up into soteriology. This soteriology, moreover, 'is characterised as an individual and subjective experience' (1997a:112). Earlier he says that there is an almost homogeneousness in Protestant theological tradition, which has tended towards a Christological soteriology that has basically revolved around 'God and my soul' (1991b:90-91) and was unconnected to the world. This has meant that 'the world' is an area in which theology does not get involved (cf. 1962c:74-75). Later, he comments that Latin American ministers of the 'holiness tradition' do not possess a theological undergirding for social action 'within the range of their rather individualistic, subjectivist, and spiritualist, evangelical heritage' (1999i:70).

Although, the Trinity has never been denied in Latin American Protestantism, neither did it nourish evangelisation and service (cf. 1999i:80). Míguez Bonino says that the Trinity 'has remained a generic doctrine which does not profoundly inform the theology and what is worse, the piety and life of our churches' (1997a:113). So he concludes: 'It is over against this background that I want to plead for a Trinitarian perspective that will broaden, enrich, and deepen the Christological, soteriological and pneumatological understanding which is at the very root of our Latin American Protestant tradition' (1997a:112). Míguez Bonino offers "ruminations" on the issue, rather than definitive answers. He is undeniably, 'opening up pathways'¹¹ for investigation and for further study. Through this concrete examination of both the Latin American Protestant tradition in its mission and theology, he lays the foundation for his 'hermeneutical meditation' on the Trinity.

¹⁰ The original lectures contained only the first three faces of Latin American Protestantism but responding to comments from some sectors of the Latin American Protestant community he added the fourth face—the Ethnic Face.

¹¹ Recalling C.S. Escobar's comment about Míguez Bonino.

6.4.3 *The Trinity as Hermeneutical Criterion*

Dangers in Trinitarian Doctrine

It is clear to Míguez Bonino that Latin American Protestant churches need to reflect upon the Trinity in order to enable them to be faithful in faith and action. However, he is not unaware of the dangers. Theologians must not forget that the Trinity is a ‘theological formulation of the church’ (1997a:112). Due to the aforementioned theological reductionism, pastors, church members and even some theological teachers tend to forget that the Trinity is a human construct. This does not deny the existence of the triune God, but simply asserts that no human formulation can exhaust its meaning and no doctrine can encompass its reality. The doctrine of the Trinity is simply an attempt, by the church (and theologians) to discern and understand the reality of God in God’s triune reality.

Additionally, there is the danger of sacralising the number three, which tends to become a ‘magic number’ by which the presence of God is invoked in nature or history. This type of numerology has been done in many traditions—both Christian and non-Christian. He comments under the *same heading*—*although it is a different issue*—that even more dangerous is the ‘division of labour’ that Protestants are guilty of, whereby: ‘we have declared eras of the Father, the Son or the Holy Spirit, or we have justified our confessional reductionism proclaiming that our theologies are of “the First Article,” “Christocentric,” or “spiritual” (1997a:113). Míguez Bonino’s descriptions of the different faces of Latin American Protestantism clearly revealed this danger.

Finally, theologians must not misunderstand the meaning of the ‘mystery’ of the Trinity. This mystery is due to God’s own freedom to remain the “wholly other”. God, however, is also the revealed mystery. God has entered into a covenant and *qualified God’s* action as ‘love, justice and faithfulness.’¹² This revealed mystery is the essence of trinitarian doctrine and a source of both wonder and worship. Apart from making plain his Barthian tendencies, Míguez Bonino *once again shows his close affinity to* the Epistle to the Ephesians. Ephesians with its strong emphasis on Christ’s revelation of God’s purposes is clear. It allows Míguez Bonino to maintain the idea of God as the wholly other, who will bring all things under Christ, but at the same time, the God who is revealed in the person of Jesus Christ.

Trinitarian Affirmations

Míguez Bonino believes that emphasising some important trinitarian affirmations will give Latin American Protestantism a theological framework to avoid the reductionisms mentioned earlier. It is vital to point out that Míguez Bonino is not building a systematic trinitarian framework but rather observing, in the framework of the Latin American experience, how some well established trinitarian criteria from historical and *modern theology can assist in his* task.

The doctrine of the Trinity is the expression of what *the Scriptures reveal* to us about the history of God with God’s people (1997a:114). In the Bible, God is revealed as creator, the originator of all things through the Word. Through the

¹² The English translation uses ‘fidelity’ but ‘faithfulness’ is a better translation of “fidelidad”.

covenant God is shown to be free to choose one nation—indeed the least of all nations—in order to bless all others. God chooses to live and to ‘pitch God’s tent’ among human beings in their concrete historical circumstances, and to pour out the Spirit on the Christian community and its members at Pentecost. This is the nature of the Trinity revealed in the Scriptures.

‘The God of the Trinity is not the eternal nontemporality of an ideal principle nor of an indeterminant constant’ (1997a:114). God is the God who enters history and thereby makes history. Therefore Míguez Bonino can say that ‘to believe in the triune God is to enter into that history’ (1997a:114; cf. Muñoz 1991:124-126). This is consistent with Míguez Bonino’s insistence that any revelation about God is not information but an appeal to enter in to what God is doing in the world (cf. 1966b:256). The fact the God has entered history and is acting in history is a demand to be committed to that to which God is committed. It is also possible to perceive here Míguez Bonino’s attempt to avoid the pitfalls of Barthian trinitarianism, so aptly criticised by Moltmann. Moltmann saw how Barth’s understanding of the Trinity tended to petrify God into a revelation of the eternal rather than a revelation of God’s plans for humanity in the future. Moltmann attempted to avoid the ontological by emphasising the eschatological. Míguez Bonino attempts to avoid the emphasis on the ontological element by emphasising the historical and ethical elements.

In philosophical terms, God is revealed to be the one who is “before us,” “with us,” and “in us”. God is before us in that God is transcendent. Transcendence does not mean ultimately unknowable and remote but the one who is wholly other. God cannot be held or encompassed within human concepts and institutions and God will destroy any institution that becomes an idol instead of a sacrament (cf. 1976b:65-68). God is free from human control and cannot be “conjured up” by human invention or magic. God is free to judge and to forgive. However, God is also the one who is “with us.” This balances God’s transcendence with the fact that God, in Christ, became human; became the vulnerable one among the vulnerable. God becomes *human* words, law, covenant and a people. Míguez Bonino can, therefore say: ‘God’s incarnation in history is witnessed by the concrete word in a book—the Bible—and the concrete congregation of a people—the church—where God really is, fully and truly present’ (1997a:115; italics in original). Finally God is “in us” in the vital presence of God in the Christian’s life. This is the power of the Spirit to use develop and consecrate the Christian’s gifts to God’s service in love. This is the power of joy in the Christian’s life. This corresponds to ‘experience, prayer, preaching, worship, not as mere psychological or symbolic phenomena but as the “burning bush” of God’s presence (1997a:115).

Míguez Bonino firmly places his understanding of the Trinity *in the framework* of salvation history, and is consistent with his understanding of the historical nature of revelation. God is more than the revelation of God in salvation history. Framing the concept in classical trinitarian language, the Imminent Trinity can only be known through the Economic Trinity but the Economic Trinity is the true representation of the Imminent Trinity; God’s actions are consonant with God’s character (cf. Boff, L. 1988:214-215 and Rahner 1978:136-137). Therefore, the nature of God can be known through the actions of God. ‘In this sense we begin from “the economic Trinity” and move to the affirmation of the “immanent” or “ontological Trinity”’ (1999i:80). This affirmation brings with it a danger that earlier

Liberation Theology did not know how to avoid. The relationship between God's action and human action and the eschatological significance of human action led to an "inflation of the human", whereby God becomes 'a process which is somehow made possible in human action' (1999i:80; cf. Alves 1969). Therefore, it is important to emphasise that 'the absolute priority of the immanent Trinity in the order of being is the theological safeguard of God's priority in the order of salvation' (1999i:80). He adds 'God does not become Trinitarian in God's acts; the acts reveal an eternal Trinitarian transcendence' (1999i:80). God's action, therefore, leads to the Trinitarian understanding.

Additionally, Míguez Bonino attempts to recover *the idea of the Trinity* as 'the communion of the persons' (cf. Segundo 1974: 98-111). This, of course, emanates from the concept of the Cappadocian fathers. As Leonardo Boff points out (Boff 1988:159ff), God is not the absolute "I" of the philosophers or 'the despotic monarch who projects on the skies the image of an absolute emperor' (1997a:115 cf. Moltmann 1983:48; Boff, L. 1993:390). This is important because people's view of God is greatly affected by their experience of political reality. The monotheistic declaration that God is One tends to lead to the understanding that God is a kind of monarch who concentrates power in God's own hands. This, according to Leonardo Boff is one of the difficulties in the correct understanding of God (cf. Boff 1993:390-391). It could also be said that the revelation of God as Trinity in the Christian scriptures is a corrective of that misunderstanding (Boff 1988:148-154). In Christological terms, the Christ, who makes known the God of the Trinity, is not a Celestial Monarch (cf. 1977h), he is the second person of the trinitarian community.

Míguez Bonino declares that the triune God 'is a permanent conversation, a communion of love, an identity of purpose and unity of action: Father, Son and Holy Spirit' (1997a:115). He emphasises that God's unity of action has its roots in the identity of purpose and ultimately in the fact that God is a communion of love and a permanent conversation (cf. Segundo 1974: 111). Much earlier in his career, he affirms this in regard to the unity of God as paradigm for the unity of the church. He says, 'the unity of the triune God is not in itself solitary incommunicado but rather essentially and ontologically fellowship, co-participation and love' (1969d:37-38). The very nature of God is not essentially to be found in unity conceived of as singular oneness but rather in terms of collective unity; a unity of persons committed to a purpose and action because of the reality and expression of love.

Míguez Bonino does not want to assume the full Cappadocian understanding of the Trinity—especially the danger of subordinationism—but prefers the idea of perichoresis.¹³ John of Damascus describes the concept in the following way.

The subsistences [i.e., the three Persons] dwell and are established firmly in one another. For they are inseparable and cannot part from one another, but keep to their separate courses within one another, without coalescing or mingling, but cleaving to each other. For the Son is in the Father and the Spirit: and the Spirit in the Father and the Son: and the Father in the Son and the Spirit, but there is no coalescence or commingling or confusion. And there is one and the same motion: for there is one impulse and one motion of the three subsistences, which is not to be observed in any created nature (OF 1.14).

¹³ *Circumincessio* (Lat.).

Leonardo Boff calls this “coinherence” of the persons of the Trinity (Boff 1988:4-7). Boff and Míguez Bonino follow the Greek understanding that this trinitarian relationship is the model for all human relationships.

What we are shown here is the nature of ultimate reality: The life of God is communion; identity is not affirmed by closing in on oneself *but by opening up to* the other; unity is not singularity but rather full communication. It is in that image we are created, it is in participation in that constant divine “conversation” that we find the meaning of our existence, life abundant; it is on this model we should structure our human relations. Neither the all-embracing authority of one over another, nor an undifferentiated mass uniformity, nor the self-sufficiency of the “self-made man,” but the perichoresis of love is our beginning and destiny—‘as persons, as church, as society (1997a:116).

According to Moltmann, the Trinity as social programme has its roots in the work of three nineteenth century theologians: Russian Orthodox Nicolai Fedorov, British Anglican F.D. Maurice and Danish Lutheran Nicolai Grundvig (Moltmann 1983: 56). It is a concept that those Liberation Theologians who have reflected upon the doctrine of the Trinity have used. Moltmann and the Liberationists have seen the concept of the Trinity as both a paradigm for society and a critique of the false ideology of God, which are religious reflections of monarchical socio-political philosophies (cf. Marx’s 4th Thesis on Feuerbach). This concept is decisive in Míguez Bonino’s attempt to deepen and strengthen the themes of the church and the Kingdom of God through a reflection on the doctrine of the Trinity.

Finally, ‘what the triune God does in the world—in creation, in reconciliation, in redemption—is always, at the same time and in concerted fashion, the work of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit’ (1997a:116).¹⁴ This warns us against making a division of labour within the Trinity—the Father in creation the Son in redemption and the Holy Spirit in sanctification.

This has already been mentioned in regard to the various spiritualities in Latin American Christianity, both Catholic and Protestant. The work of any member of the Trinity is the work of the Trinity as a whole. Míguez Bonino puts it in the following way: ‘Trinitarian doctrine reminds us that the God who encounters us in creation and history, in the forgiveness of sins and in the search for sanctification, is the same God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit (1997a:117). This is affirmed in regard to salvation (cf. 1969d:38). The Bible uses a wide range of terms to describe God’s action in salvation. Not all of this language—in fact very little of it has religious overtones; redemption, safety, health, liberation and restoration. The New Testament tends to use salvation more specifically as what God did in Christ and it is Pauline theology that gives these terms a more specifically theological significance. Latin American Protestantism follows this understanding and tends to assign salvation wholly to the work of the Son with the Father and the Spirit being auxiliary. Biblically speaking, however, salvation is far wider than “spiritual” aspects prevalent in Paul and is the work of the Trinity, not simply the Son (1999i:72-73). It is, therefore, to the work of this Trinity that humanity in general and the church in particular must respond in its fullness and multidimensionality.

¹⁴ Cf. Augustine’s formula, “*Opus trinitatis as extra indivisum* (or *Opera trinitatis as extra indivisa sunt*). Augustine, *De Trinitate*, I.4.7. cf. Chapter five (note 8).

The fact that the church does not follow this model is highlighted by Leonardo Boff who is fond of using the Trinity as a critique of the hierarchy of the established church. For Boff the church is a communion of believers ‘a people made one with the unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit’ (LG 4; cf. Boff 1988:154, 225).

Míguez Bonino seems to be proposing something similar to what Anastasios of Androussa said in his plenary address to the CWME conference in San Antonio (1989). Anastasios attempts to address the theme of ‘Mission in Christ’s Way’ from a trinitarian perspective, criticising the Christocentric emphasis of the Western tradition. He asserts that

The faith and experience of the church are summed up in the phrase: the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit, creates, provides, saves. Essentially mission in Christ’s way is mission in the light of the Holy Trinity, in the mystical presence and working together of Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Scherer and Bevans 1994: 29).

Anastasios makes several noteworthy points here. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all agents in the task of creation, provision and salvation. One cannot and should not be separated from the other. In addition, speaking in trinitarian terms, individual, spiritual salvation is not the focus but rather the integral, life affirming mission of creation, provision and salvation. Christocentric mission focuses upon one aspect of human life, whereas trinitarian mission focuses upon the whole. And finally he states that it is the mystic presence in addition to the working of the Trinity that is significant in regard to mission. That is, not only *missio Dei* but also *opera Dei personalia*. Míguez Bonino and Anastasios agree that an over emphasis on Christology within soteriology leads to an unbalanced evangelisation.

Some Contextual Issues in Trinitarian Perspective

Míguez Bonino does not try to work out these trinitarian affirmations in every area of the theological field but rather reflects upon some significant issues facing the Latin American Protestant church—Faith in Jesus Christ in the World of Religions; *the social responsibility* of Christians and a trinitarian Christological pneumatology.

Religious pluralism

In regard to the issue of Faith in Christ in the context of the world of religions, Míguez Bonino begins his reflections by examining the context of Latin American Protestantism’s relationship with ‘another religion.’ A great number of Protestants have a polemical attitude towards the Roman Catholic Church. Their relationship has generally been conceived in terms of the “truth of the Gospel” and the “errors of Romanism.” Protestants’ arguments with Roman Catholics have focussed upon issues such as purgatory, the saints and the cult of the Virgin. Some wiser theologians such as John MacKay tried relocate the question in a Christological framework (cf. MacKay 1932). The point that Míguez Bonino makes is that this discussion took place within an agreed Christological framework. Both Catholics and Protestants agreed upon certain essential Christological doctrines such as the divinity of Christ, his relationship to the Father and the Spirit, and his work on the cross.

The contemporary religious scene is far more complicated. There are vast numbers of interpretations of that scene. Míguez Bonino offers a simpler analysis. Over the past 50 years, Latin America has experienced the entrance of the great world religions. Japanese and Chinese communities are to be found in most large Latin American cities; there are African communities in the Caribbean, Brazil and Uruguay; and even some small Muslim communities in Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay. Additionally, there is a flourishing of new religious movements. There are underground indigenous movements in Peru, Bolivia and Northern Argentina; Afro-American religious expressions such as Candomble, Lucumi and Umbanda; and the re-emergence of pre-Hispanic Aztec religions, such as the cult of Quetzalcoatl. In addition the context is also complicated by growth and development of Pentecostal spiritualities that draw upon elements of popular piety. Various studies have shown how elements of the indigenous or traditional religion have been incorporated into Pentecostal spirituality as well as the way in which it is now accepted that there are certain elements in Anglo-Saxon culture that have deeply influenced the spirituality of the traditional Latin America Protestant churches. Míguez Bonino's concern is that the Christological framework of the encounter with the Roman Catholic Church will not serve the Protestant churches in this new context.

Míguez Bonino proposes a new approach. Incorporating his previous work on epistemology and the contextual view of knowledge he asserts,

[T]he new way to approach this subject should be, in this perspective, a dialogue in which differences and agreements are discovered and in which mutual influences and contributions that come to us from culture and religious experiences, when taken up in our own *faith experience*, have been reinterpreted and given new meaning in the light of revelation of the God in the covenant or if, on the contrary, they have been "baptised" without having been born again (1997a:119-120).

Dialogue, mutual understanding and mutual accountability should replace elenctic and polemic approaches (cf. 1997c:90-91; 1989c:169-170).

Míguez Bonino believes that a trinitarian Christology would provide a theological and missionary framework for the dialogue. Two dialectical statements express this framework. 'We must not separate the Jesus Christ of the New Testament from the Word "that was from the beginning" "with God and was God"' (1997a:120). The Jesus Christ of the New Testament in his historical and cultural setting must not be detached from the creative Word of God in Genesis chapter one. Míguez Bonino is careful not to use 'logos' due to the danger of understanding the universal rational principle of the philosophers, rather than the dynamic word of God found in the Old Testament.. This word is 'the creative Word that created and constantly recreates the world, the Spirit of power and life which dynamizes the natural and human world. The *dabar* (word) and *ruach* (Spirit) of Yahweh that became flesh has neither been absent from the world or the history of people' (1997a:120). There are many examples of God's word and spirit acting and inspiring those from outside of the covenant people (cf. Amos 9:7; Isaiah 44:28-45:1; Psalm 104:29-30).

Míguez Bonino has a dynamic understanding of the relationship between the Word and the Spirit. He emphasises the way the Word, through the Spirit is active in creation and in the recreation of life. God, through the creative Word and Spirit is always been working in the lives of the nations, whether those nations have

heard of that Word or not. This means that: ‘to see in the history, cultures and struggles, and in the peoples’ religions the presence of that Word and that Spirit is not to “give in” to paganism but rather to confess the One “without [whom] not one thing came into being” (1997a:120).

This perspective is a challenge to the Latin American Protestant churches. The tendency to dismiss other religions (and in some cases other denominations) as being in grave error is common in the churches. Míguez Bonino is attempting to reflect theological, rather than sociologically upon the good in other faiths and to establish the framework for dialogue.

Míguez Bonino also states that ‘it is no less true, however, that Christian theology cannot disengage the Word and the Spirit of God from the “flesh” of the son of Mary—of his teaching, his message, his life and his death, his resurrection and lordship’ (1997a:120). The flesh of the son of Mary is where the signs of the presence of the true Word and Spirit of God are to be found. The Jesus Christ who was born in Bethlehem, walked along the roads of Galilee and the streets of Jerusalem; who was assassinated by the religious leaders and imperial forces of the day and who rose again on the third day is the Word that was with God in the beginning. So he can say ‘by the yardstick of the presence of God in Jesus, one measures all presumed presence of that God in human history—there the genuine is affirmed and the idolatry of all religion and all human culture is repudiated!’ (1997a:120).

It is possible to hear echoes of Karl Barth’s assertion that God’s revelation in Jesus Christ is the denial and repudiation of all religion (Barth 1955:280-361). Míguez Bonino does not fully take on Barth’s theology of religions, but he does, as does Barth, assert that all religions are to be compared with God’s revelation in Christ. There may be other “lights” to humanity but they must be brought before the true light of Jesus Christ, where they all stand judged. Jesus Christ, as witnessed to in the gospels, is the measure of the genuine or false nature of culture and the idolatry of religion; this of course includes the idolatry of the Christian religion.

How the meaning of religious and cultural traditions is transferred needs to be investigated. Míguez Bonino believes that there is a trinitarian key. This transfer is only possible when ‘the Spirit of God works in the history and culture of peoples to witness to the meaning of Jesus Christ in their lives’ (1997a:121). In the experience of the church of Latin America this process was fractured by the Spanish invasion and imposition of a supposed Christian religion. The syncretism that resulted was not as many Protestants have assumed, due to tolerance and accommodation to the local religion by the Roman Catholic Church, but because of—on one hand—the brutal suppression of any religious form except the imported one and—on the other hand—the resilience of the indigenous beliefs to that imposition. According to Míguez Bonino, this ‘annulled the possibilities of a genuine “evangelisation”’ (1997a:121).

This is an important issue and one that does require a deeper analysis and reflection. In a footnote, Míguez Bonino notes that theology needs to reflect upon

the relation between the transcendent character of the “experience of God” whom we confess and the conditioning of all kinds (historical, ideological, psychological, cultural) of the concrete form that this experience takes (what could be called ‘the materiality’ of that experience) and the doctrinal, liturgical, or ethical expressions of that confession (1997a:121 n.19).

This is an issue that was dealt with from another angle in the section on epistemology in chapter three. In that section it was proposed that a way out of this impasse is through productive and respectful dialogue between different Christian traditions and different nations and cultures within, and across those traditions. It could also be argued that this dialogue on the presence of the Word and Spirit is one that must take place in missionary dialogue between different religions. In that dialogue the Christian and non-Christian dialogical partner can discern the meaning of Jesus Christ in their lives and in the lives of the other.

Míguez Bonino also says that theology must be aware of the risk of confusing the problem of “power” and the communication of “truth”. The fact of the violence and oppression of the first evangelisation of Latin America does not deny the truth of the gospel. Therefore, ‘to denounce the crime and senselessness of an evangelisation based on power does not mean renouncing the communication of the “truth” of the gospel, even recognizing all the inherent ambiguities in any human formulation and communication of that truth’ (1997a:121 n.19). This has been the tendency of various secular anthropologists and Protestant commentators who were keen to perpetuate the Black Legend¹⁵ and, thereby, “prove” that the evangelisation of Latin America by the first Roman Catholic missionaries was invalid and must be dispensed with. Secular anthropologists say that the violence of the first evangelisation denies modern Christians the right to evangelise. This would also deny the rights of the secular anthropologists to study the people whom they seek to protect. Protestants say that the all the accretions of the first evangelisation must be wiped away before a true evangelisation can take place. This is a simple repetition of the *tabula rasa* policy.¹⁶

Míguez Bonino proposes that ‘native Pentecostalism’ may give Latin American Protestantism a chance of recovering something of a genuine evangelisation. Genuine, in these terms would mean an ‘evangelisation from below’. He wants to see how ‘that a Trinitarian theology will try to see and hear what the Spirit of the Lord—the Jesus Christ who is present—does in the faith of those popular sectors to make real the unity of the eternal Word of Creation, the historic flesh of Jesus Christ and the faith experience of the people’ (1997a:121-122).

Míguez Bonino is concerned that evangelisation, praxis and worship of the Protestant churches of Latin America is faithful to the gospel of Jesus Christ and faithful to the context in which it is placed. He rejects the pride of that tradition of Latin American Protestantism, which believes that because it possesses the Bible, that it is the owner of the truth; this is a remnant of the colonialist and imperialist missionary strategies of both Catholic and Protestant churches. True evangelisation can only take place when all tradition—cultural and religious—is placed before the benchmark of the Word of God in Jesus Christ, and it is recognised that the Spirit of God is active in all cultural and religious traditions. Míguez Bonino is, thereby, attempting to prepare Latin American Protestants for the dialogue with other belief systems that is inevitable in multi-cultural and multi-religious Latin America.

¹⁵ The Black Legend is the idea that the Spanish and Portuguese conquerors were directly responsible for the extermination of entire Indigenous populations.

¹⁶ The Tabula Rasa policy was the belief that the missionaries has to completely eliminate of vestiges of the old religion before beginning evangelisation.

Social Involvement

A second significant contextual issue is what Míguez Bonino calls ‘the most pressing and debated question in the Protestant world, namely our responsibility concerning the problems of our societies’ (1997a:122). Various theological traditions have theological problems in getting involved in social and political action (cf. 1973h) and others have attempted to articulate theologically their involvement (cf. 1964b). He identifies one of the problems of Latin American Protestantism’s social and political quietism is that it has viewed Christology and soteriology from a purely priestly framework. Christ is the one who cleanses from sin via his atoning sacrifice; he has paid the price with his blood and washes away sin. Míguez Bonino calls this a reductionist and unilateral reading of the Scriptures. It should be impossible to ignore that Jesus Christ himself, in the gospels takes up and assumes the prophetic tradition of the Old Testament (cf. 1979d:282). The reductionist reading of the Bible, views the stories of Jesus’ life and ministry; his identification with the weak; his prophetic denunciations of injustice; his works of power on behalf of the sick and possessed; his preaching and ethical demands as a preface to the passion narratives. Míguez Bonino notes, ironically that this is where dispensationalist fundamentalists and the ultraliberal existentialist Rudolf Bultmann agree! (1997a:122). The social gospel, which attempted to recapture that prophetic perspective by centring upon the “social principles” of Jesus’ teaching, was not able to integrate this with a wider theological vision. The Charismatic movement’s concentration on Christ as Lord and the consequent central focus of discipleship has prompted a move towards a wider Christology but has not been able to define the deeper social demands of the gospel. The prophetic tradition of Jesus, based in a theology of the covenant sees: *‘redemption as liberation from slavery to the oppressive powers of history—and not only from personal or collective guilt—and for a covenant that requires the practice of justice, mercy and fidelity—a covenant of shalom not and not only of eschatological salvation’* (1997a:122; italics in original).

Various studies have shown that the movement generated by Jesus Christ moved in the prophetic tradition, within the context of conflict present in the first century after Christ. ‘In Latin America, these studies confirm a hermeneutic of the gospels centred in the message of the Kingdom and the assuming of Jesus of the “tradition of the poor” in conflict with the religious and political leadership of the dominant classes of Judaism and of the imperial powers’ (1997a:123). Jesus must be viewed within that prophetic tradition. This does not mean replacing an exclusively priestly framework with an exclusively prophetic one, but rather attempting to unify them. Míguez Bonino puts it in the following way: ‘The Suffering Servant who bears the burden of sin and frees us from guilt to begin a new life is also the prophet who cleanses the temple of the money changers and calls us to a covenant of justice and shalom’ (1997a:123). He agrees with Elsa Tamez’ work on the Pauline tradition as: “free from all condemnation” to be able to love and serve in truth and justice’ (1997a:124; cf. Tamez 1993).

This priestly-prophetic view calls for a trinitarian Christology. Míguez Bonino maintains that a Christology that is aware of the work of Word and Spirit within the triune God can understand the God who works in invitation and judgement in search of shalom and justice. This is the work of invitation to participate in God’s project of the Kingdom of God and judgement of those people

and structures which militate against justice and shalom. He concludes in the following way.

That same Jesus Christ who summons us to participate in his work in society and history is the one whose teaching and historical action define the content of peace and justice, and who, in the power of the Holy Spirit, enables us to discern the modes and characteristics of our participation as believers and as churches in the historical present in which we are called to serve (1997a:124).

Anything less is not pious neutrality but treason toward the gospel.

Pneumatology

The final contextual issue discussed by Míguez Bonino in this trinitarian framework is ‘The Trinity and Christ in the Spirit.’ Latin American Protestantism has always been strongly pneumatological. It is seen in the “revival” of the Holiness Movement of the nineteenth century and the Pentecostalism of the twentieth century. None of these movements, however, have truly developed a theology of the Holy Spirit, and much less a Pneumatology, in trinitarian perspective. The work of the Spirit may have been defined as a seal in the life of the believer in classical Protestantism or the source of the ecstatic experiences within the Pentecostal movement—but the role of the Spirit in these movements has never been related to the overarching purposes of God.

Míguez Bonino proposes that, within his trinitarian Christology, the relationship Christ/Spirit should be examined in two directions: ‘the freedom and power of the Spirit and the discernment of the Spirit’ (1997a:125).

In the language of the Bible the Spirit is seen as power: the power of the triune God at work in the world—in nature and history—in order to accomplish the purpose of God. The presence of Jesus Christ established the word and power in the midst of the world. It is artificial, and a product of hellenistic rather than biblical to set ‘Christologies of the Word’ over against ‘Christologies of the Spirit.’ Both Old and New Testaments bear witness to the fact that both word and spirit include notions of, on one hand ‘action, power and completion,’ and on the other, ‘purpose, will and revelation’. Through the Word and the Spirit, God reveals and manifests God’s will—that is God’s own character—and also realises it dynamically in nature and history.

Latin American Pentecostalism has understood the Spirit in terms of redemptive power but that power is restricted to the redemption of the individual or, in the widest sense, in the redemption of the church. The world, as the arena of the Spirit, does not enter into Pentecostal theology. Therefore, the redemption of the whole of creation spoken about in Romans 8, or the power of the Spirit which inspired Cyrus, or even the Spirit who made Balaam’s donkey speak, or who anoints Melchizedek the pagan priest/king, is unknown. Consequently, the Spirit is understood to work within the church for the benefit of and edification of the church but is not understood to be active in the world; speaking into the concrete context of world events; and without doubt not speaking to the church through the world. Even with its pneumatological inclination Latin American Protestantism has tended to limit the Spirit’s work to safe ecclesial pathways. Not only is the Spirit’s work

restricted but the church's prophetic role in the world is constrained or even submerged (1997a:126).

The recognition of the freedom and power of the Holy Spirit to work both in world and church leads to the need for a 'discernment of the Spirit' (1997a:126). Without doubt, 'power' is much desired in Pentecostal and Charismatic circles. It brings leadership, prestige and influence. The question that Míguez Bonino asks is whether that power is always of the Holy Spirit. Bearing in mind that in the New Testament "discernment" is always a gift and so is not a mechanical formula, there is still the need for certain criteria of discernment. The trinitarian purposes of God provide these criteria. Biblically speaking, the Holy Spirit of the Triune God gives, protects and redeems life. The Holy Spirit is the spirit of the God of the covenant who demands justice and establishment of shalom. So Míguez Bonino claims: 'that when the power and freedom of the Spirit are invoked and claimed for actions and conduct that conspire against life, justice and mercy, we have reason to *doubt* that it be *the* Holy Spirit' (1997a:127).

In the New Testament there is a double relationship between Christ and the Spirit. On the one hand Christ comes in the power of the Spirit and on the other Christ imparts the Spirit. 'The Spirit that Jesus Christ imparts is none other than that in which he himself acts, now "interpreted" and defined in the very activity of the Son' (1997a:127). He believes, therefore, that, although the formula is unimportant, the Western creedal addition of the *filioque* clause is justified (cf. Moltmann 1981:178-187). The presence of the power and freedom of Spirit is not legitimised in the spectacular manifestations of healings, miracles, and exorcisms but in the fruit of the Spirit. Paul's lengthy discussion of love and mutual acceptance and respect in I Corinthians 12-14 demonstrate this clearly. The centre of these discussions of course is the hymn to love in chapter 13. To declare Christ as Lord is Paul's ultimate criterion for the presence of the Spirit but those who claim to have the presence of the Spirit must act according to the Spirit (Romans 1:8; Galatians 5:16, 25; Colossians 2:6). So Míguez Bonino repeats his assertion: 'When divine power is used as a means of self-aggrandizement and domination or exploitation for economic gain, faithfulness to the gospel obliges us to doubt the legitimacy of such gifts' (1997a:127). The character of the Spirit is revealed in the Scriptures and especially in the life of Jesus Christ. When the power of the Holy Spirit is claimed then the expressions of that Spirit will be in accordance with the life and character of Jesus Christ.

Each of the contextual issues treated by Míguez Bonino in the light of his christologically focussed trinitarianism, have significant consequences for the mission of the church in the Latin American Protestant churches. Clearly, the issue of Christian witness to those of non-Christian faiths and even to those of other Christian denominations is enhanced by a serious reflection upon the relationship between Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Míguez Bonino is correct not to dislocate the eternal Word from the person of Jesus Christ, witnessed to in the gospels, but he is also right to emphasise the fact that the eternal Word is also related to the Spirit of God, who is present in the world. Without the first Christ's work is only done for the benefit of the church, and not directly for the benefit of the world. Without the latter there is no possibility of seeing the work of Christ in other peoples, faiths, and cultures.

The issue of Christian action is also enhanced by Christological trinitarianism. The salvific work of Christ should never be separated from the Old Testament understanding of salvation. ‘Physical’ and ‘spiritual’ elements of salvation are not two separate entities in the Old Testament; they are united in the covenant. The covenant is always the work of the Word and Spirit of God. Only when theologians recognise that Christ stood in both the priestly and prophetic traditions of the Old Testament can they truly integrate the ethical preaching and teaching of Christ with his priestly role.

The issue of the place of the Holy Spirit in Christian mission is enriched by a Christological trinitarian reflection. In the Bible, the Holy Spirit accomplishes the will of God, in creation, inspiration and redemption. The Spirit’s power is never limited to the church; it is active in the world. The Spirit reveals God’s character to the world and is thus the spirit of mission. Discernment of that Spirit’s activity in the world and the church is, therefore, vital. The Spirit is the spirit of the covenant. That covenant is a covenant of justice and peace. Any activity—whether in the Church or world—that claims to be of the Holy Spirit will comply with those criteria of the covenant. The Spirit is also the spirit of Christ, and so the Spirit’s activity will also correspond to what is seen in the life of Christ as recorded in the gospels.

6.4.4 *A Trinitarian Missiology for Latin American Protestantism*

*Mission as Material Principle*¹⁷

This study has argued that Míguez Bonino’s theology can be described as ‘faith seeking effectiveness.’ This section investigates how he has expressed this in terms of ‘mission’ as the material principle of a Latin American Protestant theology. Although Latin American Protestant theology has often looked to the *sola fide, sola scriptura, solus Christus* formula, or justification by faith as the material principle for its existence and its self-understanding, Míguez Bonino argues that ‘mission’ could also be thought of as its material principle. It is true that Latin American Protestantism has affirmed the authority of the Bible, the doctrine of justification by faith consistently and even aggressively over the years. These have been witnesses to ‘a new transforming, and vital experience into which Latin American people were invited to participate’ (1997a:130). This is clearly true of the “Evangelical”¹⁸ and Pentecostal faces of Latin American Protestantism but, is also true of the “Liberal” face. Early liberal leaders—normally but not always missionaries—always considered their presence in Latin America to be essentially ‘missionary.’ Evidence for this is to be found in their participation in the work of the IMC and Life and Work Conferences (1916, 1925 and 1929.) Although ‘healthy doctrine’ was always a concern for these leaders the life and witness of the believer was always more important. This is probably the reason that Faith and Order (FO) never took root in Latin America. ‘Unity as mission—evangelising and social—makes sense in the self-understanding of Latin American Protestantism; unity as a predominantly doctrinal and ecclesiastical project does not evoke interest or response’ (1997a:131). Even those ecumenical organisations with their origin in Latin America, such as ISAL,

¹⁷ The formal principle is the basis or authority upon which a belief is based, whereas the material principle is the central tenet of a religious body.

¹⁸ In the Anglo-Saxon sense of the word.

UNELAM and CLAI are mainly concerned with mission. Consequently, Míguez Bonino argues 'mission' should be seen as the 'material principle' of Latin American Protestant theology.

This 'material principle' ought to be understood as 'a theological orientation which, as the best expression of the life and dynamic of the religious community, will give coherence and consistency to the understanding of the gospel and become a point of reference for the theological building up of the community' (1997a:131). It is not 'an explicit theological formulation but rather is an "ethos" that permeates the speech, worship, and life of the Protestant community, a self-understanding manifested in all attitudes, conflicts, and priorities' (1997a:131).

It is significant to note that this proposition is also clear in the early nineteen sixties. In a paper given as one of the plenary sessions of the first CELA (1961), Míguez Bonino affirms that the centre of the New Testament and the Christian faith is a message. That message is Jesus Christ (1962c:71). It is 'the totality of what we proclaim; the totality of word and action that testifies to Christ: that of the believer and that of the church (1962c:69). Verbal testimony is 'the essential articulated and the most identifiable form of this message' (1962c:69) but is also 'attitude of life, worship, the direction of our church, the life of the believers in the world, their struggles and sufferings' (1962c:69). Mission in word and deed is central to Latin American Protestantism's self-identification.

The way Míguez Bonino describes how mission 'expresses the life and dynamic' of the community and 'gives it coherence' in its self expression and its understanding of the gospel recalls Antonio Gramsci's notion of historical organic ideologies, described in chapter three. Gramsci said that these ideologies 'have a validity which is "psychological"; they "organize" human masses, they form the terrain on which human beings move, acquire consciousness of their position, struggle, etc' (Gramsci 1971:367). In Latin American Protestantism, mission functions by uniting, organising, and giving self-expression in identity and struggle.

This also demonstrates how Míguez Bonino sees mission as the locus not only of theology but also of the life of the church. It is the point from which the church understands itself and from where faith seeks effectiveness.

Míguez Bonino is not unaware of the ambiguous nature of 'mission' in Latin America. Anglo-Saxon missionary movements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries rode the wave of colonial and neo-colonial expansion and their "ethos" also took on the distinctions of that movement. Although Míguez Bonino rejects the notion that mission was directly related to British and North American imperial expansion, he asks:

To what extent has the very self-understanding that presided and mobilised the tremendous European and North American missionary enterprise of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as reflected in attitudes, worship, and theology, borne the marks of the "colonialist" spirit? (1997a:132).

The Methodist missionary movement reflected the emerging Capitalist ethos and assumed the fact that God had raised up the British Empire to take the gospel to the heathen. In the United States this ethos was transformed into the idea of 'manifest destiny' in attitudes toward the neo-colonialist project. It is also reflected in the

hymnody of the early nineteenth century.¹⁹ The missionary movement that planted churches in Latin America had internalised colonial ideology and had integrated it into its theology and mission practice.

This leads Míguez Bonino to ask two penetrating questions. These questions form the context for Míguez Bonino's the search for a new missionary theology:

First, has the postcolonial mission, or even anti-colonial mission and evangelization, which has changed the designation of boards and of missionary personal—boards of global ministries, fraternal workers, sharing of resources—found a theological articulation coherent with the desired change. Second. Perhaps more important, have the imperialist characteristics that marked the ethos and language of missions that trained us remained imprinted on our native evangelization (1997a:134).

Míguez Bonino's answer would be “no” and “yes” respectively. No, foreign mission boards have not found a theological articulation to express their postcolonial or anti-colonial mission work and yes, the ‘ethos and language’ of those who planted the churches in Latin America has remained imprinted on the life and ethos of Latin American missionary enterprise. The criterion of Latin American Protestant theology and identity maybe ‘missionary’ but this identity has been deeply influenced by the ‘imperialist characteristics’ that marked the missionary movement that planted Latin American Protestant churches and trained its leaders. The church now must seek a new theological articulation in a trinitarian missionary theology.

A New Trinitarian Missionary Theology

The early twentieth century saw the articulation of various theologies of mission in order to integrate the two theological concepts of “mission” and “church”. Míguez Bonino states that in this regard: ‘there have been two dominant and fruitful efforts: an ecclesiological missiology and a missiology of the sovereignty of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God’ (1997a:136). These have helped to begin to overcome the imperialist ethos of the missionary movement, but he fears that they could very easily give way to a new imperialism; this is especially true of the Kingdom of God. He is convinced that in Latin America ‘the option for the poor’ has partially countered this tendency. For example, Jon Sobrino identifies the Christ who announces the Kingdom of God with the Christ who identifies with the poor (Sobrino 1984:40-53). Emilio Castro shows how the Christ who reigns is the servant Christ (Castro 1985:55-56).

Using the words of Wilhelm Andersen, he proposes: ‘Theologically we must dig even deeper; we must trace out the originating impulse in faith in the triune God; from that standpoint alone can we see the missionary enterprise synoptically in its relationship to the Kingdom of God in its relationship to the World’ (1997a:138).

Although, the church and the Kingdom of God are both biblical and evangelical, Míguez Bonino believes, however, that: ‘these same motivations are strengthened and deepened when the ultimate horizon is ‘the very life of God’ and hence the mission is not only obedience and witness but also contemplation, prayer,

¹⁹ Míguez Bonino quotes the hymn by Reginald Heber (1783-1826), *From Greenland's Icy Mountains*, which is based on Acts 16:9.

praise' (1997a:139; author's italics). Essentially it is participation in who God 'is' and what God 'does.'

Míguez Bonino believes that the Christological hymns of Ephesians and Colossians describe this participation. The inclusion of the gentiles into the church is placed into the framework of the mystery of God's will and the unity of all things under Christ. Humanity, in its totality is included into the very life of God through Jesus Christ. It is this God who introduced the believer into the realms of the mystery, 'which is none other than that love of God which dwells by faith in the believer' and introduces him or her into "All the fullness of God" (Eph 3:14-19) (1997a:139). To be a believer in Christ is to be part of the life of the triune God.

Míguez Bonino explores this assertion in terms of the trinitarian affirmations made earlier. Later theology expressed Paul's statements in terms of uniting the economic Trinity—what God does (the *missio Dei*)—with the immanent Trinity (*opera Dei personalia*)—the operation of who God is. The acts of God witnessed to in the Bible, are indeed a true and authentic image of who God is. There is no way to know God—be it through Gnostic, mystic or magical means—other than the revelation of God through God's acts. He uses the words of Leonardo Boff to explain his understanding:

Now, God's revelation to us is the actual being of God. So if God appears to us as a Trinity, this is because God's actual being is a Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) not just for us, but in itself. If God appears to us as source mystery and unoriginated origin, so as absolute transcendence, and so as Father, this is because God is Father. If God is revealed to us as enlightening Word and Truth, and so as Son or eternal Logos, this is because God is Son. If God is communicated to us as love and power for the purposes of carrying out God's final plan, and so as Holy Spirit, this because God is Holy Spirit. The divine reality of the Trinity makes the manifestation of the divine in history be trinitarian, and the truly trinitarian manifestation of God makes us understand that God is in fact a Trinity of Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Boff 1988:96 quoted in 1997a:140; cf. Boff 1988:144).

This cosmic approach in Míguez Bonino's later work is a shift from his 'anthropocentric' emphasis or 'christological humanisation' of his earlier work. In the nineteen seventies, he stresses the fact that Christ as the true human makes the believer more human by being made like Christ, whereas here Míguez Bonino highlights the incorporation of the believing subject into the very life of God. Deification has replaced humanisation.

In regard to perichoresis Míguez Bonino emphasised the internal life of God; the inter-communication and interpenetration of the hypostaseis of the Godhead. There is also an 'extrovert' element in perichoresis. It is an overflowing of that life to all created reality—the world, human history, human beings themselves. This is expressed in the sendings of God. God is always sending and being sent into the world. Although the Nativity and Easter are definitive and ultimately unrepeatable historical events, they find their source in the eternal mission of 'the very trinitarian reality' (1997a:140); the very life of God. Christ's birth into this world and his death upon the cross, ultimately are expressions of the divine intra-trinitarian life.

Humanity is included into the *missio Dei* as an expression of its incorporation into the *opera Dei personalia*. The question of the role of the church in God's mission in the world; the nature of God's involvement in the world; and the

tension between concepts such as ‘humanisation’ and ‘evangelisation’ were issues that the ecumenical movement struggled to come to terms with after the Willingen meetings of the IMC (1952).

The inclusion of humanity into the divine life and mission, raises the thorny issue of synergism; human mediation in the acts of God. The question can be framed in the following way: if Christ invites humanity to participate in his work in society and history, how is that human work ‘incorporated’ or ‘assumed’ into the life and work of the trinitarian God?

For Míguez Bonino, there is no doubt that the Bible uses salvific terminology when describing human acts of justice and rescue. Put bluntly, human beings, in a limited way, provide salvation. The human subject could be a king, judge, leader, or *even* a member of *the common* people. The salvific act could be described as redeeming, liberating or restoring. In these cases, it is always clear that this salvific act is limited. Biblically speaking, God is always ‘the saviour’ par excellence. Míguez Bonino expresses that ‘the priority and singularity of divine intervention remains central to the biblical language of salvation, even when human beings are frequently the mediators or agents of God’s action’ (1999i:73). The relationship between those human acts and divine acts must be theologically articulated, avoiding synergism: traditionally, the doctrine that individual salvation is achieved through a combination of human will and divine grace.

Earlier Míguez Bonino dealt with the problem of synergism in the framework of the covenant (1983b:250-253) but in the late nineteen nineties, he avails himself of the Christological concept of *enhypostasia* to deal with this. Strictly speaking *enhypostasia* describes the relationship between the divine and human nature of Christ. It was probably Leontius of Byzantium (485-543) who first used the term to describe the notion of ‘finding one’s being in another.’

Guillermo Hansen, in his thesis on the Trinity and Liberation Theology, applies this concept to the incorporation of human activity into the divine. In a carefully worded section, Hansen argues for, what he calls, ‘A Trinitarian Solution for an Old Synergistic Habit’ (Hansen 1994:859-870). Hansen is attempting to resolve one of Liberation Theology’s perceived insoluble contradictions, namely ‘the allegedly synergistic relationship between divine and human agencies’ (Hansen 1994:860; italics in original).

Hansen’s understanding of this post-Chalcedonic term is heavily mediated by Barth. In the double election of Jesus Christ, God chose to posit within the divine being the existence of another being, yet still to remain God. The Lordship of the Father is what Hansen calls ‘contingent upon the en-hypostatization of the creatural’ (Hansen 1994:866).

Hansen transfers this to his understanding of relationship between divine action and human action. Míguez Bonino summarises Hansen’s conclusions: ‘the divine initiative gets its historical identity as it becomes incorporated (“incarnate”) in human praxis, and human praxis gets its transcendent meaning and its reality as it is assumed by the Holy Spirit’ (1999i:81). Both Míguez Bonino and Hansen are aware of the need to affirm that all human action takes place between the times and is thereby still under God’s judgement. Míguez Bonino further emphasises the fact that Christian action, not only the Christian, that is, to use a phrase of Luther, *simul justus et peccator*.

Humanity is included into God's 'visitations' in an en-hypostatic way. In creation, mission is 'work' or 'labour,' where humanity is included in God's labour of creation in the weekly rhythm of life. The continuing creation of God is made concrete in human labour. God's work exceeds human labour but never empties or alienates it. In salvation, mission is viewed as covenant. Justice, mercy and peace come to life in the law and the obedient community is included in this mission (1999i:72-72). In the sending of the Son, those who believe and who will believe are also incorporated into the mission of the Son (John 17:18). When Paul speaks of 'fulfilling in his body' the redemptive work of Christ (Colossians 1:24) he is expressing this very fact: that he is participating in the life and therefore the mission of the triune God. This is done, of course, in the power of the Spirit: 'In the operation of the Spirit that the Father and Son send, the same Trinity gives "witness" of the truth of the gospel' (1997a:141). Therefore Míguez Bonino can make the bold statement that: 'The evangelizing mission is not an external act carried out by the church but is "the visible face" of the mission of the triune God' (1997a:141); and in an interview says that the mission of the Church is 'the active participation in the purpose of the Triune God in the world' (interview 1997).

So, elaborating on the fact that the work of each member of the Trinity is at the same time the work of all, Míguez Bonino can say that the 'mission' of the Spirit does not only have to do with redemption and sanctification but with the 'total work of the triune God.' This of course includes justice, peace, righteousness—with God's involvement in human life and the history of the world. He concludes: 'Work, government, and human society; witness and service to the gospel; and the building of history are equally participation in the totality of this "mission" of the triune God who is the same Father, Son and Holy Spirit in all that God does' (1997a:141).

There are, however, within the unity of God's work, different dimensions. As the church rightly noted, the Father is not the Son or the Spirit; the Son is not the Father or the Spirit and; the Spirit is not the Father or the Son. God incorporates humanity into the divine task in different ways. And so: 'God's work and our participation in it, in the cultural, social, political, economic, ecclesial, and evangelizing task, is at once recognized and respected, and the particularity of each of these tasks is taken into account' (1997a:142). He concludes:

There are distinctions regarding the proper subject of these acts (organised society, church, individuals); the modality of participation in the varying identities we have as members of society, of families, and of the community of faith; and the way to carry out that participation—the use of power, the spheres of law and gospel, one's own autonomy, loved and ordained by God—in each of these spheres (1997a:142).

Latin American Protestants' "evangelisation" must be located therefore in this framework.

Mission and Evangelisation in the Latin American Protestant Churches

By reducing the missionary task to the announcement of the 'so-called plan of salvation' and inviting people to conversion, Latin American Protestantism has failed to participate fully in the life and work of the triune God. Míguez Bonino believes that the trinitarian framework will help correct the reductionist elements in Latin American Protestant worship, piety and conduct.

Míguez Bonino seeks to apply his framework to some missiological issues. Latin American Protestantism has 'separated evangelisation from service, conversion from the search for justice, worship of God from life in the world, participation in the community of faith from responsibility in society' (1997a:143). It is almost as though it has tried to make a division of labour within the God it worships. The liberals highlight the action of the creator, the evangelicals emphasise work of the saviour and the Pentecostals and Charismatics stress the work of the Comforter.

A truly trinitarian evangelisation—just as a truly trinitarian worship and action—is the invitation to participate in faith in the very life of the triune God and hence in totality of what God has done, is doing and will do to fulfil God's purpose of "being all in all" (1997a:144; cf. 1999i:82).

Evangelisation must be a proclamation of the whole counsel (life and work) of the triune God.

Míguez Bonino then asks the question as to whether evangelisation is at the service of the growth of the church or the transformation of the world. Individual conversion has always been important in the evangelisation campaigns in Latin American Protestantism. Most people were converted, however, through face-to-face contact and through family or friendship relationships. Míguez Bonino thinks there is a danger in focussing exclusively upon numbers. Numerical strength has led to the possibility of political power in some Latin American countries. This has been especially true of Brazil and Guatemala. Protestant politicians are welcomed on the grounds that they will facilitate evangelisation. In this way, political involvement is a means by which to make more converts. The ghosts of Christendom seems to come back to haunt the Latin American Protestantism church.

Míguez Bonino rejects the dichotomy between individual or societal conversion. The dichotomy drives a wedge between the persons of the Trinity. It separates the work of the Creator and the Redeemer.

True evangelisation must aim at the personal nucleus that makes a human subject responsible for his/her own existence as well as the mesh of surrounding interpersonal and structural relationships which condition and constitute the area of existence and action (1997a:147).

Again Míguez Bonino refers to the concept of *perichoresis* to explain the dynamics of the individual invitation life and faith and how it relates to society.

If evangelization introduces the human being to the intratrinitarian communion which is the life of God, it is not the isolated individual nor the depersonalized multitude which reproduces that life in history, but the community of love, participation, purpose: a community of worship, proclamation, personal growth, in which the participants are "sent" and "send each other mutually" to the multiplicity of tasks of "the missions" of the triune God (1997a:147; cf. 1949a and 1949b).

The central locus of a true evangelisation is the community of faith. The trinity is a paradigm of the life of the community. It is what strengthens and equips the believer for her/his life in the world. Conversion is a personal but not individual experience. Conversion is incorporation into the life of the trinity which is expressed

in the life of the community; which in turn concerned with the community life of the world.

The means and methods of evangelisation must also be subject to examination in the light of intra- and extra-trinitarian nature of God's self communication. There is no subordination of God's self communication between Father, Son and Spirit, but there is mutual submission in love. This divine conversation was clear in the ministry of Jesus Christ. His reflected the character of God by using the means of communication that reflected the trinitarian life (1997a:148). God chose this way to approach creation and the creatures that live in, and this is the paradigm that Christians should use in their communication of the gospel.

6.5 FINAL OBSERVATIONS

Míguez Bonino did not reflect deeply on the doctrine of the Trinity until late in his career. His stated context for his trinitarian missiology is the theological reductionism of much of Latin American Protestantism. Almost all theology has been reduced to Christology and Christology is swallowed up into soteriology. This soteriology, moreover, is individualistic and subjective. Theology has to do with God and the soul of the individual. Therefore, the Trinity has never really informed Latin American piety and practice. Míguez Bonino believes that reflection on some basic trinitarian affirmations will ameliorate this reductionism as well as deepen and strengthen theological reflection on the Kingdom of God and ecclesiology.

The doctrine of the Trinity is the expression of what the Scriptures reveal about the history of God with God's people. God is not revealed as Trinity in a philosophical formula but rather in God's relationship with Israel and the church. Additionally, Míguez Bonino wants to recover the Cappadocian idea of the Trinity as the 'communion of persons.' The triune God 'is a permanent conversation, a communion of love, an identity of purpose and unity of action: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.' Finally, he wants to emphasise the fact that 'what the triune God does in the world—in creation, in reconciliation, in redemption—is always, at the same time and in concerted fashion, the work of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.' Latin American Protestantism has tried to formulate a 'division of labour' within the Trinity according to theological tradition: historical churches relate to the Father; Evangelical churches relate to the Son and the Pentecostal churches relate to the Holy Spirit. A trinitarian theology should help to eliminate this theological and practical reductionism. He examines contextual issues in this light.

In regard to Christ among the World Religions he suggests that the Jesus Christ of the New Testament should not be separated from the creative Word of God and that the teaching, message, life and death, resurrection and lordship of the son of Mary should not be disengaged from the Word and Spirit of God. The life of that Jesus is the measure of all religion and culture. In regard to social action he asserts that Latin American Protestantism needs to recapture the prophetic tradition of Jesus. That tradition sees: '*redemption as liberation from slavery to the oppressive powers of history*—and not only from personal or collective guilt—and *for a covenant that requires the practice of justice, mercy and fidelity*—a covenant of *shalom* not and not only of eschatological salvation.' Finally, he explores the Trinity and the Spirit in

terms of the freedom and power of the Spirit, on one hand, and discernment of the Spirit on the other. The Holy Spirit of the Triune God gives, protects and redeems life. The Holy Spirit is the spirit of the God of the covenant who demands justice and establishment of shalom.

In this context, Míguez Bonino examines how mission can be understood as material principle of a Latin American Protestant theology. Mission, of course, is an ambiguous concept, having close association with imperialism and colonialism. He believes that a trinitarian missionary theology will help avoid Latin American Protestantism falling into colonialist tendencies. He attempts to briefly apply these reflections to some issues within the mission and evangelisation of the Latin American Protestant church. He concludes: ‘A truly trinitarian evangelisation—just as a truly trinitarian worship and action—is the invitation to participate in faith in the very life of the triune God and hence in totality of what God has done, is doing and will do to fulfil God’s purpose of “being all in all.”’

The influences upon Míguez Bonino’s trinitarian work are multiple. However, it is clear from this chapter that Míguez Bonino is drawing upon orthodox trinitarian articulations, particularly from the Cappadocian Fathers as well as Leontius of Byzantium and John of Damascus. However, those articulations are often mediated by theologians such as Karl Barth, Jürgen Moltmann, Anastasios of Androussa and select Latin American theologians.²⁰ Therefore, to engage in source criticism would be futile.

In this context, it is important to mention how the work of J.E. Leslie Newbigin (1909-1998), and especially his book, *Open Secret* (1978) are strangely absent from Míguez Bonino’s trinitarian reflections. *Open Secret* was written as an intentionally trinitarian missiology, yet Míguez Bonino does not comment on any aspect of that book, or indeed any of Newbigin’s trinitarian work. This is also strange because Newbigin and Míguez Bonino were friends for many years. Newbigin spoke at the first CELA (1961); they shared a missionary and ecumenical passion; and sat in many meetings over the years. Perhaps Míguez Bonino felt that the context of Newbigin’s work was too different from the Latin American context to be of use, or that Newbigin’s trinitarian reflections are too Christocentric and do not develop the Father or the Holy Spirit enough (cf. Goheen 2000:163-164). However, this could also be said of Míguez Bonino’s own work.

Some final comments are in order. Míguez Bonino is attempting to work out a trinitarian missiology that is faithful to his praxis driven methodology. In the context of the church’s commission to bear witness in the specific context of Latin America and from within the reality of Latin American Protestantism, he reflects contextually upon the Trinity and applies concretely to the context from which he started. It is only in deepening and strengthening theological reflection in the light of the Trinity that a Latin American Protestant theology be faithful to the gospel and faithful to the context. It is ‘faith seeking effectiveness.’

Míguez Bonino is also attempting to deepen and strengthen his work on the Kingdom of God. Earlier in his ministry, he is insistent that the Kingdom of God is established by God’s actions. However, these divine actions are not developed in trinitarian perspective: they are either the actions of God in divine unity or they are actions of one of the members of the Trinity. In his later, more developed trinitarian

²⁰ It is instructive to note that in the early sixties he translated Reinholt Seeberg’s classic text-book on the history of doctrine (1963f) into Spanish, which must have led him to reflect upon trinitarian formulae.

theology, these actions are expressed as the actions of the triune God: in creation; in redemption; and in inspiration and regeneration. He is concerned, not only to emphasise how Father, Son or Holy Spirit are involved in the establishment of divine rule, but how the members of the Trinity are jointly involved and complement one another in this process. In this way he hopes to avoid the theological reductionism and 'division of labour' described above.

Also, in the context of the Kingdom, the task of missionary theology is to discover how to respond to God's action and thereby take part in the establishment of the divine Kingdom. This raises the problem of *synergism*: how does human action relate to divine action without one subsuming the other. Míguez Bonino's earlier 'dialectical monist approach' was satisfactory at the time, but he felt the need for a more theological articulation of this issue. He believes he found it in the christological concept of *enhypostasia* as expressed by Leontius of Byzantium. Míguez Bonino declares that 'the divine initiative gets its historical identity as it becomes incorporated ("incarnate") in human praxis, and human praxis gets its transcendent meaning and its reality as it is assumed by the Holy Spirit.' The question could be asked as to whether this later articulation avoids the danger of *synergism* or of 'total immanentism' (1979d:272) expressed in chapter four. However, the point being made here is that Míguez Bonino was attempting to deepen and strengthen his earlier reflections through a trinitarian key.

In regard to Míguez Bonino's reflections on ecclesiology, he emphasised his belief that the church is the community gathered around the twin poles of faith in Christ and commitment to the poor. These poles are not two points joined by a line along which Christians locate themselves; i.e. greater commitment to Christ means less commitment to the poor and vice versa. Rather the poles are dialectically related; commitment to Christ is commitment to the poor. In trinitarian perspective, Míguez Bonino sees that commitment to Christ is commitment to the concerns of the triune God. The triune God is the God of life, who is committed to every aspect of human life. The *missio Dei* brings human beings, and indeed the whole humanity into the realms of the *opera Dei personalia*. The mission of the church is to announce and live out in its witness, action and worship the reality of that 'very life of God.'

This also deepens Míguez Bonino's reflections upon ecumenism and mission. In his writings on ecumenism, he is concerned that ecumenical discourse should not fall into ideological pronouncements with no basis in reality. Talk about church unity can easily become a smokescreen, which covers up the true rift within the church. These are not doctrinal and structural rifts but rather economic and social ones. Church unity cannot be affirmed when the majority of the church and the world lives in poverty and a privileged minority live in luxury. His reflections on the action and being of God reveal the problem of the breach between the action and being of the church. Unity in action and unity in being are linked. In the same way that there is no gap between the economic and immanent trinitaries or, put in another way, between the *missio Dei* and the *opera Dei personalia*; there should be no rift between unity of action and unity of being. Just as God is who God is revealed to be, so the church's actions should reflect its being. Too often what the church is and how it acts are diametrically opposed.

It is apparent that Míguez Bonino could have continued to reflect upon other theological and missiological themes in light of trinitarian theology. It must be

recalled, however, that when he wrote *Faces of Latin American Protestantism* he was almost 70 years old. Nevertheless, it is regrettable that he did not do so. It is the task of other Latin American theologians to take up this task and so provide the Latin American Protestant churches with the challenge to a more genuine evangelisation, action and worship of the triune God.