

A. The Church’s relation to civil society? **Three models**

1. **FORTRESS CHURCH** – Church insulates itself against civil society; guards against “contamination” from politics; Church as “*societas perfecta*” (“perfect society”)
 - a. Examples include: Catholic Church during 18th and 19th centuries; Essenes sect during Jesus’ time; proponents of modern day “Benedict Option”
 - b. Problems include: failure of solidarity with the world; refusal of the Church’s mission in and for the world (cf. Acts 2)
2. **CASTLE CHURCH** – Church seeks to be in positions of power and ultimately to (help) rule society;
 - a. Examples include: Early Christian Church after Constantine; “German Christian” movement during 1930s/1940s; proponents of modern day “integralism”
 - b. Problems include: use of force to achieve spiritual ends; risks the Church becoming ‘captive’ to political forces; forgets that Christian power is “made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12)
3. **DISSENTING CHURCH** – A middle-ground between rejecting the world and assimilating to it; Church seeks to correct power without becoming contaminated by it; ‘in the world but not of it’; dissent as a mode of *engagement* with the world.
 - a. The communicative dimension of dissent: A claim of solidarity – Dissent as a way of reasoning with the other – Dissent as a way of expressing approval/disapproval.
 - b. The corrective dimension of dissent: A call for conversion – Dissent as a way of challenging and changing the other – Dissent as a check on power.

B. Characteristics of a dissenting Church? **Three characteristics**

1. **PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR** – A dissenting Church will speak with and on behalf of the powerless against those in positions of power – Will be more concerned with the affliction of the oppressed than the comfort of the oppressors – Dissent as a substantive value that orients action.
2. **DIRECT ACTION** – A dissenting Church will not stop at words – Not enough to ‘call out’ injustice – Dissent involves an active presence in the world, it aims at changing the world – This is what the martyrs and saints have done.
3. **INTERNAL LIFE AMENABLE TO DISSENT** – A dissenting Church must be comfortable with ambiguity, tension, and even internal division (up to and including the public voicing of dissent) – Recognizing alternative sources of authority (as opposed to bishops alone) – Dissent as a way of being Church.