RELATING FAITH AND POLITICAL ACTION: UTOPIA IN THE THEOLOGY OF GUSTAVO GUTIÉRREZ

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Abstract

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This dissertation investigates Gustavo Gutiérrez's understanding of liberation as a three-dimensional process: 1) economic and political emancipation; 2) creation of a new humanity in a new society of justice; and 3) freedom from sin. The notion of "utopia" corresponds to the second dimension, and works as the bridge allowing for the relation of faith to political action without confusion or collapse. This dissertation argues that the notion of utopia serves as a central, unifying concept for Gutierrez's entire theological project.

Chapter 1 examines the stages in the formation of Gutiérrez's theology. First, Gutiérrez studied in Europe where he was exposed to nouvelle theologie. Second, Gutiérrez returned to Peru and its situation of injustice. Third, Gutierrez incorporated insights from the Second Vatican Council and Populorum Progressio. Fourth, Gutierrez's theology was confirmed at the Latin American bishops' conference held in Medellin, Colombia in 1968.

Chapter 2 analyses utopia as treated in *A Theology of Liberation*: Gutiérrez's sources for the notion, what he means by the notion, and how it operates throughout this work.

This dissertation argues that utopia's essential role of mediating between faith and political action, allowing for relation without collapse, is necessary for properly interpreting Gutiérrez's theology.

Chapter 3 investigates how utopia functions throughout Gutierrez's subsequent works. Without explicitly treating of utopia, Gutierrez continues to structure his argument around utopia's mediating role as he discusses topics like spirituality, theology, and the Trinity.

Chapter 4 investigates critics of Gutiérrez: Cardinal Ratzinger, (Pope Benedict XVI), and "Radical Orthodoxy's" Daniel Bell. Ratzinger argues that Gutiérrez's use of utopia results in a collapse of faith into politics. Bell argues that Gutiérrez's theology keeps these poles mutually exclusive. This dissertation argues that a proper understanding of Gutiérrez's use of utopia invalidates these criticisms.

Chapter 5 examines the theology of the Philippines' Second Plenary Council. The council's appropriation of liberation theology's insights fail to adequately relate faith and political action because of a lack of understanding of utopia's mediating role within Gutiérrez's three dimensions of liberation. This discussion of the council's theology confirms the importance of utopia as an essential concept in a theology of liberation.

To my loving parents

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INTRODUCTION

I. Statement of the Problem

In his theology of liberation, Gustavo Gutierrez seeks to articulate the relationship between faith and political action. This dissertation investigates Gutiérrez's understanding of liberation as a single complex process with three interdependent dimensions: 1) economic, political, and social emancipation; 2) the creation of a new kind of humanity in a new kind of society characterized by solidarity and justice; and 3) liberation from sin for communion with God and others. He discusses the notion of "utopia" as corresponding to the second dimension above, and as the needed bridge which allows for the fruitful relation of faith to political action without confusion or collapse. The thesis statement of this dissertation is that this notion of utopia is more than just a topic in Gutierrez's *A Theology of Liberation*¹; rather, it serves as a central, unifying concept for his entire theological project.

Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Teologia de la liberacion: perspectivas* (Lima, Peru: Centro de Estudios y Publicaciones, 1971). There are two editions of the English translation of this work: *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation,* ed. and trans. Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1973) and *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation,* rev. ed. with a new introduction by the author, ed. and trans. Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988).

II. Definition of Key Terms

The three terms "theology," "liberation," and "liberation theology" are central to Guiterrez's work and to this dissertation. As such, they merit a brief definition.

1) Theology. The Concise Dictionary of Theology defines theology as follows:

In the West the methodical effort to understand and interpret the truth of revelation. As *fides quaerens intellectum* (Lat. "faith seeking understanding"), theology uses the resources of reason, drawing in particular on the disciplines of history and philosophy. In the face of the divine mystery, theology is always "seeking" and never reaches final answers and definitive insights.²

Gustavo Gutierrez would concur with the above definition. However, he further defines theology as "critical reflection on praxis in light of the word of God." This latter definition will be examined at greater length below.

- 2) Liberation. As will be discussed in detail below, Gutierrez's understanding of the term "liberation" is central to his theology and to this dissertation. Gutierrez defines liberation as a single process that involves three inseparable dimensions: a) economic and political emancipation, b) the creation of a new humanity in a new society characterized by freedom and justice, and c) liberation from sin for communion with God and others.⁴
- 3) Liberation Theology. The *Concise Dictionary of Theology* defines the movement as follows:

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Gerald O'Collins and Edward Farrugia, *A concise Dictionary of Theology* (New York and Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 2000), p. 263.

See Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Teologia de la liberacion: perspectivas* (Lima, Peru: Centro de Estudios y Publicaciones, 1971), pp. 3-12. There are two editions of the English translation of this work: *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation*, ed. and trans. Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1973) and *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation*, rev. ed. with a new introduction by the author, ed. and trans. Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988). Unless otherwise noted, quotations are from the 1988 revised edition. Whenever possible, citations will be given in square brackets to the revised edition, the first English translation, and the first Spanish edition, respectively.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 16-25.

A largely Latin-American movement that (a) is inspired by the Exodus, prophetic calls for justice, and Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom, (b) reads the Bible in the key of integral liberation, and (c) has struck deep roots where structures of injustice and economic dependence oppress great masses of poor people. Its better exponents include Juan Luis Segundo (1925-96), Jon Sobrino (b. 1938), and, above all, Gustavo Gutierrez (b. 1928), whose book A Theology of Liberation (original edition 1972) launched the movement. Deeply concerned with the public function of theology in encouraging social change, the leaders of this movement have always been developing a spirituality of liberation.⁵

The discussion below will confirm this definition.

III. Review of Related Literature

Much has already been written on Gutiérrez's ideas especially on his theology of liberation, and many authors discuss the notion of utopia in Gutiérrez's work, a fact consistent with the argument for the importance of utopia in his theology. However, the previous scholarship on Gutiérrez has neglected how the concept of the vision of a future society characterized by justice and solidarity functions throughout his literary corpus, and how it can be profitably used as an interpretive key for understanding Gutiérrez. This failure to identify the role that the concept of utopia plays in organizing Gutiérrez's theological thought constitutes a significant lacuna in the secondary literature on Gutiérrez's theology. It is the contention of this dissertation as well that Gutierrez himself has not explicitly emphasized the importance of the notion of utopia enough.

Authors Alfred Hennelly, Robert McAfee Brown, and Gaspar Martinez have developed carefully written and accurate descriptions of Gutiérrez's theology viewed as a whole. As such, they are extremely helpful in providing insights into Gutiérrez's

O'Collins and Farrugia, pp. 139-140.

Alfred Hennelly, "General Introduction," in Liberation Theology: A Documentary History, trans. and ed. Alfred Hennelly (New York: Orbis Books, 1990), xv-xxvi; Robert McAfee Brown, Gustavo

thought, and all mention Gutiérrez's definition of utopia. Of these three, however, only Martinez attends to the concept of utopia in any length, but he does not attempt to provide a careful and extensive analysis of the idea of a more humane society in Gutierrez's thought. Since Martinez's focus is rather on how Karl Rahner's theology influences Gutiérrez, Martinez does not endeavor to study how the notion of utopia functions throughout Gutiérrez's theology, how it can serve as a profitable interpretive key, nor how the notion of utopia properly understood can serve as the main defense against Gutiérrez's critics, as this dissertation will argue.

Other authors approach Gutiérrez's theology with a different focus. Margaret Campbell, for instance, investigates Gutiérrez's theology as a critical theory and compares it with the thought of Jürgen Habermas. Philip Gibbs looks at Gutiérrez's understanding of revelation and compares it with those of Aloysius Pieris and Jean-Marc Ela. Given their respective foci, neither of these authors discusses the notion of utopia at any significant length. Another significant interpreter of Gutiérrez is Antonio Pernia, a Filipino. In his doctoral dissertation (later published as a book), he investigates Gutiérrez's understanding of the Kingdom of God in comparison with Leonardo Boff and Juan Luis Segundo. Pernia discusses the notion of utopia in relatively greater detail than

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Gutiérrez: An Introduction to Liberation Theology (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990); and Gaspar Martinez, *Confronting the Mystery of God* (NY and London: Continuum International Publishing, 2001).

Margaret Campbell, Critical Theory and Liberation Theology: A Comparison of the Initial Work of Jürgen Habermas and Gustavo Gutiérrez, American University Studies VII (New York: P. Lang, 1999).

Philip Gibbs, *The Word in the Third World: Divine Revelation in the Theology of Jean-Marc Ela, Aloysius Pieris and Gustavo Gutiérrez* (Roma: Pontificia Universita Gregoriana, 1996).

Antonio Pernia, *God's Kingdom and Human Liberation: A Study of G. Gutiérrez, L. Boff and J. L. Segundo* (Manila, Philippines: Divine Word Publications, 1990).

do Campbell and Gibbs, but he does not adequately assess its central role throughout in relating faith and political action in *A Theology of Liberation* (nor is that his intent).

Another Filipino theologian, Virgilio Ojoy, in his dissertation (also later published as a book), focuses on the relationship between Marxism and religion in Gutiérrez's thought, with an aim of appropriating a Marxist reading of Gutiérrez's theology for the Philippines and the Church's role there. Ojoy carefully studies Gutiérrez's theology, particularly Gutiérrez's use of the social sciences and aspects of Marxist thought, but Ojoy does not discuss the notion of utopia nor its role as mediating between faith and political action.

Another recent dissertation is that of Joyce Mary Nora Murray's. ¹¹ She writes about Gutiérrez's soteriology and the communal dimensions of salvation. And while any discussion of Gutiérrez's soteriology will include a discussion of his notion of utopia, her focus is not on the centrality of the notion of utopia in Gutiérrez's thought as that which provides for the meaningful relation of faith to political action without collapse.

Furthermore, she writes with an aim towards an ecclesiological application in her native Canada, further distinguishing her focus from that of this dissertation.

Curt Cadorette's work is especially important to this dissertation because he discusses the notion of utopia in Gutiérrez's theology more than any of these previous authors.¹² In his doctoral dissertation (also later published as a book), he discusses with some detail the origins of the notion of utopia in Gutiérrez's thought, carefully discussing

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Virgilio Abad Ojoy, *Marxism & Religion: A Fusion of Horizons* (Manila, Philippines: University of Santo Tomas, 2001).

Joyce Mary Nora Murray, "The soteriology of Gustavo Gutiérrez: Communal dimensions of salvation" (Ph. D. diss., University of St. Michael's College (Canada), 1997).

Curt Cadorette, *From the Heart of the People: The Theology of Gustavo Gutiérrez* (Illinois: Meyer-Stone Books, 1988).

the thinkers to whom Gutiérrez is indebted. Cadorette then extensively discusses why and how utopia is different from ideology for Gutiérrez. However, Cadorette does not carefully analyze utopia in terms of its central role of mediating the dimensions of liberation throughout Gutiérrez's corpus. Thus, he does not look at utopia as an interpretive key which can serve as a unifying concept for the whole of Gutiérrez's theology. Furthermore, he does not look at how the notion of utopia can serve as the basis for defending Gutiérrez's theology against the critics.

IV. Organization of Subsequent Chapters

In chapter 1, this dissertation examines the key stages in the formation of Gutiérrez's theology of liberation. The first stage is Gutiérrez's studies in Europe, where he was exposed to the *nouvelle theologie*. The second stage is Gutiérrez's return to his native Peru and the widespread oppression and poverty in that country and the whole Latin American continent. The third stage is the new direction taken in magisterial teaching such as is found in the Second Vatican Council and the papal encyclical *Populorum Progressio*. This dissertation examines how Gutiérrez brought his theological training into dialogue with his context, and, armed with new insights from Vatican II and *Populorum Progressio*, began crafting a theology that understood salvation in terms of liberation and understood liberation as a single complex process with three interdependent dimensions. This renewed theology helped lead to, and was confirmed in, the fourth stage, the second general conference of the Latin American bishops held in Medellin, Colombia in 1968. The resulting theology is solidly rooted in Gutiérrez's theological sources but is at the same time truly a renewed way of doing

theology, attendant to the specific questions raised by his own unique Latin American context, particularly as regards the relationship between faith and political action.

Chapter 2 focuses on an analysis of the notion of utopia as it is found in *A Theology of Liberation*: Gutiérrez's sources for the notion, what he means by the notion, and how it operates throughout the whole book. It becomes clear that according to Gutierrez, liberation is a single process with three distinct yet inseparable dimensions. The notion of utopia plays the essential role of mediating between faith and political action, allowing for relation without collapse. This dissertation argues that this understanding of utopia is necessary for properly interpreting Gutiérrez's theology, especially since one of the central questions Gutiérrez is trying to answer in *A Theology of Liberation* is the question of the relation between faith and political action.

Chapter 3 investigates how utopia functions throughout subsequent works by Gutiérrez. In *We Drink From Our Own Wells*, Gutiérrez provides a fuller treatment of the spirituality of liberation. Gutiérrez hardly mentions the notion of utopia in this book, but it will be argued that the notion of utopia is essential to his understanding of the spirituality of liberation, particularly in the way utopia helps to mediate between the recognition of God's gratuitous love and the demands for justice which this divine love makes. In *On Job: God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent*, Gutiérrez provides a treatise on the proper way to speak of God and God's love particularly in a situation characterized by widespread and often innocent suffering. Gutiérrez does not mention utopia at all in this book, but it will be argued below that the notion of utopia plays an important role in properly relating the two languages which Gutiérrez describes as necessary for proper God-talk: contemplative language and prophetic language. Finally,

in *The God of Life*, Gutiérrez provides a treatise on the triune God. This dissertation will demonstrate that the notion of utopia continues to play an important role in this book insofar as the triune God calls us to seek God's reign. This requires utopia as the necessary bridge which mediates between faith and political action, relating these two poles without collapse.

Chapter 4 looks at two major critics of Gutiérrez: Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, and Daniel M. Bell, Jr. of the Radical Orthodox school. Ratzinger argues that Gutiérrez's use of utopia results in a collapse of faith into political action. Bell argues that Gutiérrez's theology keeps these two poles separated to the point of mutual exclusivity. Both critics agree on the centrality of Gutiérrez's three dimensions of liberation to his theology, but neither critic seems to adequately understand the notion of utopia and the role it plays within the three dimensions of liberation. This dissertation argues that a proper understanding of Gutiérrez's notion of utopia renders these and other similar criticisms invalid.

In chapter 5, this dissertation further argues for the importance of the notion of utopia to Gutiérrez's theology of liberation by looking at how this theology is applied in a context apart from Latin America — the Philippines. The theology espoused in the Philippines' Second Plenary Council¹³ is examined and it is demonstrated that the council's appropriation of Latin American liberation theology's insights fail to adequately relate faith and political action precisely because of a lack of understanding of utopia's mediating role within Gutiérrez's three dimensions of liberation. This discussion of the theology of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines confirms the importance

Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, *Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines* (Pasay City, Philippines: *Paulines* Publishing House, 1992).

of utopia as an essential and too often overlooked term in a theology that seeks to be liberationist.

CHAPTER 1

TOWARD A THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION

Introduction

This chapter discusses four key stages in the development of Gustavo Gutiérrez's liberation theology. The first of these stages is Gutiérrez's studies in Europe (1951-1960), where he was exposed to certain currents of thought, particularly the French *nouvelle theologie*, that were to have a lasting impact upon his theology. The second stage (1960-1968) is the situation in his native Peru upon his return from Europe, with the new, different, and urgent questions which that context posed. The third stage is the influence on his theology by some of the magisterial teachings during the pontificates of Pope John XXIII (1958-63) and Pope Paul VI (1963-1978), especially the documents of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). The last stage (1968-1971) is the second general conference of the Latin American bishops, held in Medellín, Colombia, in 1968 and the mutual impact between this conference and liberation theology.¹⁴

Why study these four chronological stages? Robert McAfee Brown, a friend to Gutiérrez and an acknowledged expert on him and his work, states that studying Gutiérrez's theology necessarily means studying his life:

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The Medellín conference is also known as CELAM II (*Consejo Episcopal LatinoAmericano*). CELAM I was held in Rio de Janeiro in 1955.

While some theologies are born in libraries or studies or seminar rooms, Gustavo's theology has been born in the midst of his sharing in the struggle of oppressed peoples to achieve liberation. Where they come from, what their grievances are, why the received theologies are inadequate for them, all influence the theology that grows out of that ongoing struggle. So to look at Gustavo's life is already to have begun an exposition of his theology, and is the only legitimate entrance to it (emphasis added). 15

In the study of these four stages, three themes emerge: the movement within the church to embrace modernity's anthropological turn, the harsh realities of the Latin American political and economic situation, and Gutierrez's attempt at synthesizing these two in his theological project. These three themes find their culmination in the 1968 conference at Medellin, where the Latin American church officially adopts a theology which is more responsive to the Latin American situation.

This presentation of Gutierrez's theology draws on a number of sources. Scholars on both Gutierrez and Latin American theology are consulted in the study of the development and influences of Gutierrez's early theology. An examination is then made of key magisterial documents of this period such as *Populorum Progressio* and *Gaudium et Spes* in order to study how they influenced the development of Gutierrez's theology. Then, two of the most significant works of Gutierrez's early writings -- *Lineas pastorales de la iglesia en America Latina*, ¹⁶ which was first published in 1968, and "Toward a Theology of Liberation" (July 1968) are analyzed. ¹⁷ Studying these two early works of Gutierrez shows how he integrated his various influences in developing what later

Robert McAfee Brown, *Gustavo Gutiérrez*, Makers of Contemporary Theology, (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1980), 21.

Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Lineas Pastorales de la Iglesia en America Latina: Analisis teologico*, (Lima, Peru: Centro de Estudios y Publicaciones, 1970).

Gustavo Gutiérrez, "Toward a Theology of Liberation," in *Liberation Theology: A Documentary History*, trans. and ed. Alfred Hennelly (New York: Orbis Books, 1990), 62-76. The original Spanish, *Hacia una Teologia de la liberacion* exists as a mimeographed copy of Gutiérrez's talk given in Chimbote, Peru in 1968, and is in the archives of the De Las Casas Institute in Lima.

becomes known as the theology of liberation. Finally, the documents from Medellin are examined to demonstrate that the Latin American church adopted an approach to theology similar to (and influenced by) Gutierrez, thus serving as a confirmation of Gutierrez's project as well as a future source.

1.1 Gutiérrez's Studies in Europe

As noted in Robert McAfee Brown's biographical study, Gutiérrez studied in Europe between the years 1951 and 1960. From 1951 to 1955, he learned psychology and philosophy in Louvain. From there he studied theology, first at Lyon from 1955 to 1959, and then at Rome until 1960 – completing what Brown refers to as the "theological grand tour." As Gaspar Martinez's study of Gutierrez further clarifies, this grand tour included, particularly at Lyon, an exposure to *la nouvelle theologie*, a theological movement that began in the French-speaking world which was "an effort to dig in the sources of scripture, patristic tradition, medieval history, and Thomism in order to present an alternative to the reigning neo-scholasticism and to face openly the challenges posed by modernity and social-cultural transformations to Christianity and to the Catholic Church." This new way of doing theology was especially developed in the works of Yves Congar, Henri de Lubac, M.D. Chenu, and Jean Danielou. It was also fueled by the emergence of the transcendental Thomism of Cardinal Mercier, Joseph Marechal, and Karl Rahner.

McAfee Brown, Gustavo Gutiérrez, 22

¹⁹ McAfee Brown, *Gustavo Gutiérrez*, 22.

Gaspar Martinez, *Confronting the Mystery of God* (NY and London: Continuum International Publishing, 2001), 111.

In light of his immersion into the fresh theological endeavors of European scholars, Gutiérrez began to re-think what Christianity is and what being church means, particularly in relation to the modern world. *Nouvelle theologie* emphasized the need to turn to history. Gutierrez thus learned that theology is not to be understood as operating in a vacuum – attention must be paid to the believing subject. In the case of his theology, the believers are the people of Latin America, with all their unique characteristics.

Martinez notes that this exposure to and assimilation of this new theology "has marked his pastoral strategy and his theological thought." Martinez enumerates some of these influences: "...the overcoming of the duality of nature-supernature by de Lubac, the formulation of the role of the laity in church and society by Congar, the link between pastoral practice and theology, and the use of social sciences (including Marxism) as partners reclaimed by Chenu and Danielou.²²

Frei Betto, noted Brazilian author and theologian, acknowledges the significance of *la nouvelle theologie* to the development of Gutierrez's theology, but Betto also notes other European influences from this period.

Gustavo Gutiérrez can deservedly be considered the *father* of theology of liberation...Nonetheless there is no denying the European roots springing from Maritain's integral humanism, Mounier's committed personalism, Teilhard de Chardin's progressive evolutionism, de Lubac's social dogmatics, Congar's theology of the laity...²³

Gutierrez learned from theologians who emphasized the modern turn to human experience. Furthermore, this subject lives in a world which is understood differently.

Martinez, *Confronting the Mystery*, 111. Pope Pius XII condemned *la nouvelle theologie* in his encyclical Humani Generis (1950)

Martinez, Confronting the Mystery, 112.

Frei Betto, "Gustavo Gutiérrez – A Friendly Profile" in *The Future of Liberation Theology: Essays in Honor of Gustavo Gutiérrez*, ed. Marc Ellis and Otto Maduro (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989), 32.

New categories are used to explain the relationship between nature and supernature. It is no longer a world of Christendom. What then is the role of the church in society? What is the role of the laity within the church? How does one make sense of the greater desire for freedom throughout the world? Gutierrez grappled with these and other similar questions and he found his answers from his European studies. However, unlike his mentors, Gutierrez's subject is not the European. Gutierrez produces his theology for Latin Americans, and more than their possible unbelief, his main concern is the poverty which dehumanizes so many on his continent. Thus, the second stage is reached: the situation in his native Peru upon his return from his European studies. It is at this stage that Gutierrez begins to adapt what he studied for the Latin American context.

1.2 The Return to Peru

As mentioned earlier, in order for one to know Gutiérrez's theology, one must know his life's story. Essential to that undertaking is a knowledge of the situation in his native Peru. This section thus has two parts. The first is a discussion of the Peruvian socio-economic context, including a brief discussion of Latin America's history from the time of its colonization up to the present. It was not just the harsh reality of the Latin American situation that helped create liberation theology, however. Gutiérrez's interpretation of this reality was influenced especially by certain key Latin American intellectual figures and debates. These Latin American intellectual influences are discussed in the second part of this section.

1.2.1 Socio-economic and Historical Context

While obviously no two countries in Latin America are exactly alike, there are numerous similarities in terms of colonial history, level of economic development, and culture which allow for some measure of generalization. In this section, the Latin American context and its roots in its colonial history in general are described, followed by a more specific focus on Gutierrez's native country of Peru.

Arthur McGovern's description of the ongoing socio-economic effect of Latin America's colonial history provides a helpful indication of how thinkers such as Gutierrez understand the situation.

The Spaniards and Portuguese brought some of the riches of their culture to the new world, but their goals and methods of conquest set patterns that would affect not only the Indians they conquered but a whole way of life for the colonizers themselves.

Their treatment of the native Indian population *created an economy and social life built on oppression and exploitation from the outset* (emphasis added).²⁴

McGovern further describes this as an oppressive economic situation in which wealth and ownership became concentrated in the hands of a wealthy elite, with the vast majority of the population working on lands which were not their own and where a majority of the profit from their work did not go to them. Furthermore, a rigid class structure was established. McGovern describes it thus:

Spaniards stood at the top; they occupied the top positions in government and in the church, and they held the most wealth. The creoles of Spanish blood, but born in America, occupied the next highest rank. They became landholders and business leaders but were looked down upon socially by the *peninsulares* from Spain. Below the creoles stood the *mestizos*, products of Spanish-Amerindian mingling, and below them black slaves.²⁵

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Arthur McGovern, *Liberation Theology and Its Critics* (New York: Orbis Books, 1989), 107.

²⁵ McGovern, *Critics*, 110.

This class division was the norm until the nineteenth century, when independence arrived in Latin America, McGovern further clarifies. Even with the advent of the political freedom of Latin-American countries from their colonial rulers, the social and economic situation remained unchanged. Wealth was still concentrated in the hands of a few – either landowning oligarchies, or foreign investors.²⁶

Furthermore, a pattern of foreign dependency became entrenched. McGovern notes that this foreign dependency happened because Spain and Portugal impeded industrial ventures in Latin America and restricted trade only to themselves. Thus, the native Latin Americans were never able to develop the requisite skills or experience in business enterprise. Furthermore, the wars for political independence left the Latin American countries heavily indebted. McGovern clarifies that agriculture and mining, the two key economic bases in the region, were in shambles after each country gained its political autonomy.²⁷ As a result of all these factors, the local economies were increasingly foreign-dominated, and debt continued to rise. It is argued that this pattern of dependency continues up to the present and can be traced from colonial times – Latin American nations have remained economically dependent -- on Spain and Portugal initially, then on Britain and the United States.

This "theory of dependency" arose in the 1960s in opposition to the then reigning notion of developmentalism. The dependency theory maintains that developing countries are economically related to developed ones in a way that precludes the full development

McGovern, Critics, 111.

McGovern, *Critics*, 112.

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of the poor countries, and in fact reinforces their economic subordination.²⁸ The theory of dependency seemed to thinkers such as Gutierrez to provide a more accurate account of Latin American reality than the previously dominant theory of developmentalism.²⁹

McGovern writes that dependency theory "played an instrumental role in the very articulation of a theology of liberation." Martinez also notes that the theory of dependency "was influential on the social analysis of Gustavo Gutiérrez when he first formulated his liberation theology at the end of the 1960s." Gutiérrez himself, in describing the Latin American context of the 1950's and 1960's, cites the importance of the theory of dependency:

The 1950s marked the beginning of a better understanding of socioeconomic reality in Latin America. We have already discussed the theme of underdevelopment... But soon the perspective we call "developmentalism" revealed its great weaknesses: in particular its acceptance of the model of development offered by the rich countries and its failure to analyze the causes of poverty.

Dependency theory, formulated by Latin American social scientists in the mid-1960s, helped to overcome those weaknesses. Despite the limitations we see in it now, that theory led to qualitative progress in the study of the social order prevailing on the continent.³²

Gutierrez argues that it is not sufficient merely to accept the fact of poverty in Latin

America. In order to address the injustice prevalent in the continent, one must also

examine the causes of said poverty. While acknowledging some limitations in the theory

Developmentalism holds the optimistic view that poor countries can follow the pattern of development of the richer ones – to transition from foreign-oriented growth to inward development. See Gutierrez's treatment in *A Theology of Liberation*, pp. 49-54.

For a fuller discussion of the theory, see McGovern, *Critics*, 125-129.

Arthur McGovern, "Dependency Theory, Marxist Analysis, and Liberation Theology" in *The Future of Liberation Theology*, ed. Marc Ellis and Otto Maduro, 273.

Martinez, Confronting the Mystery, 106.

Gustavo Gutiérrez, "The Meaning and Scope of Medellín," trans. Margaret Wilde in *The Density of the Present: Selected Writings* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), 75.

of dependency, Gutierrez notes that the theory was instrumental in better understanding the Latin American socio-economic reality. In addition to economic factors, political considerations must enter into the equation as well. An adequate theory of development must take into account the situation of dependence and the possibility of becoming freed from it.³³

Whether or not one subscribes to the theory of dependency and its analysis of the causes of poverty in Latin America, the *fact* of the poverty in the continent is inarguable. While statistics are never sufficient to describe a socio-economic reality fully, a few key ones might help to at least paint a general picture of the situation in Peru, a situation as troublesome in the present day as it was when Gutiérrez first returned.³⁴ In 1961, the poorest 20% of the population received less than 2.5% of the national income. In contrast, the richest 10% received over 49% of the income. Families in the poorest quartile had incomes ranging from \$40 to \$120 per year. Most of the poor were subsistence farmers, around 70% of which were illiterate.

Gutiérrez himself does not cite long lists of statistics very often in his writings. It is worthwhile, therefore, to cite in full an evaluation made by Gutiérrez in 1996 of the ongoing situation of poverty in Peru, a situation he encountered in the 1960s upon his return from Europe and still faces today.

I come from a country in which about 60 percent (more than the average in Latin America) of the population finds itself in a situation of poverty (13 million people in a population of 22 million) and 25 percent (or 5 million people) live in extreme poverty. A country where 120 out of every 1000 children die before reaching five years of age; a country where two of every 1000 people suffer from tuberculosis,

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A Theology of Liberation, p. 54.

Statistics are from Richard Charles Webb, *Government Policy and the Distribution of Income in Peru, 1963-1973* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1977) pp. 6-14.

a disease which has already been eliminated by medicine; a country where cholera has this year affected 300,000 people, of whom 3000 have died. This disease is a disease of the poor because it is caused by a very fragile virus which dies at a temperature of 60 degrees. But the poor suffer from it because they lack the economic means to boil water or to prepare food in sanitary conditions.³⁵

Curt Cadorette helps fill out the picture painted by these statistics. He argues that the oppressive socio-economic situation leads to the dehumanization of the poor in countries like Peru. He describes the Peruvian capital of Lima as "a city of frustrated hopes where lives are cheapened by a socio-economic system that regards people as expendable commodities or, in Gutiérrez's term, 'non-persons.'" Cadorette looks to the capitalist economic system as the culprit in the dehumanization going on in Peru (and the continent at large). He buttresses his argument by describing the effects of international capitalism on countries like Peru:

Given the profit-oriented values and policies of international capitalism, it is not surprising that economic disparity, dehumanization, and violent reaction characterize the social climate of many Third World countries. Those at the "top" of the social pyramid no longer view the poor as citizens with rights or even as human beings who merit ethical treatment. When textiles can be produced more cheaply in Lima than in North America, industrialists and banks set up the necessary factories. If economic conditions change or profitability decreases, workers are simply fired, plants closed, and operations transferred to a more profitable country. Profit, not human development, is the "bottom line" for international capital.³⁷

What Cadorette describes might be the most dehumanizing aspect of the poverty in Peru.

The poor are treated merely as tools for production, rather than as people. Important decisions are made on the basis of what produces greater profit, with little if any regard on the consequences to the majority of the population.

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Gustavo Gutiérrez, "John of the Cross: A Latin American View" in *Gustavo Gutiérrez: Essential Writings*, trans. and ed. James Nickoloff (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 320-321.

Curt Cadorette, *From the Heart of the People: The Theology of Gustavo Gutiérrez* (Illinois: Meyer-Stone Books, 1988), 8.

Cadorette, *From the Heart*, 9.

As dire as the economic situation in the 1960s in Latin America was, there were other factors that helped give birth to liberation theology. McGovern also describes the importance of social and political unrest. He notes the significance of Fidel Castro coming into power in Cuba in 1959, establishing a socialist system which sought to break away from U.S. dependency, and indicates that this "spurred new hopes in many Latin Americans." He also mentions that Che Guevara had helped "implant the same revolutionary spirit and organization in other countries of Latin America." Given the stark living conditions of the people, it is not surprising that these revolutionary ideals and aspirations quickly took root.

McGovern further notes the increasing militancy of student groups, often with Marxist revolutionary goals. He mentions the increased radicalization of Catholic Action groups who were disenchanted with ineffective attempts at reforms "and the hesitancy of the institutional church to take more decisive stands." Upon his return to Peru, Gutierrez was appointed national ecclesiastical assistant to the UNEC, the Peruvian organization of Catholic students, along the lines of Catholic Action. In this capacity, Gutierrez was exposed to the discontent students had with the prevailing situation. He was also exposed to the revolutionary aspiration students shared with others at that time for a better society. This discontent with the current state of affairs and the desire for a new and better society are key characteristics of what Gutierrez would term "utopia," which will be shown below to be central in Gutierrez's theology of liberation.

McGovern, Critics, 6.

McGovern, *Critics*, 6.

McGovern, Critics, 7.

1.2.2 Some Key Latin American Intellectual Influences

It was not just the oppressive socio-economic situation in Peru which helped give birth to Gutierrez's liberation theology. Gutierrez was also heavily influenced by certain Latin American thinkers. The first of these influences to be discussed is Paulo Freire (1921-1977). Freire was a well-known Brazilian educator and theorist whom Alfred Hennelly indicates is one of the key influences from this period which contributed to the development of liberation theology. Freire was well-known for his educational method known as conscientization. ⁴¹ Freire writes in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) that the oppressed must reflect upon their own concrete situation. They must recognize their dependence and transform it into independence. Liberation cannot simply be granted from without, it must well forth from within. 42 This effort at consciousness-raising is central to the technique of conscientization. Freire applied this technique as he taught literacy to Brazilian peasants. His intention was "to liberate them from socio-cultural enslavement by becoming aware of their own dignity and rights, aware, too, of the real causes of their oppression, and of the urgent need to become active agents of their own destiny in seeking avenues of change."⁴³

Many of the poor believe that their situation is their fate and that nothing can be done to improve their lot in life. Freire's methods emphasize that there are causes for poverty, that these causes must be examined, and that the poor themselves must actively seek to effect the required change. Gutiérrez himself notes the importance of Freire's

⁴¹ See Hennelly, "General Introduction," *Documentary History*, xviii-xix.

See The Paulo Freire Reader, ed. Ana Maria Araujo Freire and Donaldo Macedo, (New York: Continuum, 1998) p. 64.

Hennelly, "General Introduction," xviii.

work, especially its influence on Medellín and its emphasis on the importance of the poor becoming agents of their own destiny.⁴⁴ This emphasis on personal agency remains an important part of Gutiérrez's theology throughout.

In addition to Freire, the importance of Peruvian thinkers Jose Maria Arguedas and Jose Carlos Mariategui to Gutierrez's theology is undeniable. Curt Cadorette has provided a study of these two thinkers' influence on Gutierrez and he states that "no one has influenced his (Gutiérrez's) thinking more than two fellow Peruvians: José María Arguedas and José Carlos Mariátegui." Arguedas was a novelist with whom Gutiérrez shared a brief, but memorable friendship. Arguedas's novels talked about the conflict between the rich and poor, the *mestizos* and the *campesinos*. His portrayal of this conflict between rich and poor was highly influential to Gutiérrez. Cadorette describes Arguedas's writings thusly: "His novels and poetry are epics of conflict between ideological and utopic forces or, in theological language, between sin and salvation." This struggle between ideology and utopia plays a central role in Gutiérrez's theology, as shall be demonstrated below.

Mariátegui, a Marxist whose writings were instrumental in the eventual formation of the Peruvian Communist Party, was a very influential thinker in Latin America during this time. Cadorette notes that Mariátegui was and continues to be a source of national pride for Peruvians. Though Mariategui died more than half a century before *A Theology of Liberation* was written, "he continues to influence the political imaginations of his

See Gutiérrez, "The Meaning and Scope of Medellín," 77-78.

⁴⁵ Cadorette, *From the Heart*, 67.

Cadorette, From the Heart, 68.

compatriots. His ideas are part of everyday political language in Peru."⁴⁷ One of the main reasons for this ongoing influence is that he was the first person to examine the inner workings of Peru's history from the perspective of the oppressed.⁴⁸

Gutiérrez agrees with Cadorette's assessment. In an interview from 1980, Gutierrez says of Mariategui's significance:

Mariátegui is especially significant for Peruvian culture. It is he who, for the first time, tries to think out the Peruvian historical process and the Peruvian reality of his time with new and distinct categories which have had an enormous impact on the way we understand our society. I have had the opportunity to work through Mariátegui for academic reasons. For several years in the University I taught a course dedicated entirely to Mariátegui's ideas... ⁴⁹

As will be evident below, Gutierrez continues throughout his work Mariategui's emphasis on viewing history from the perspective of the poor.

Gutiérrez's exposure to Marxism at this time was not limited to Mariátegui's ideas. As Cadorette points out, Gutiérrez was also aware of the Christian-Marxist dialogue which took place in Europe in the 1960s, even though he had now returned to Peru. Thus, Gutiérrez was familiar with the writings not only of Marx himself, but also of other later Marxists such as Antonio Gramsci and Ernst Bloch. All of these thinkers influenced Gutiérrez's theology, especially in his use of the notion of utopia, and this influence is discussed in the next chapter.

Upon his return from Europe, Gutierrez was confronted with a situation of extreme poverty in his native land. There was also an increasing revolutionary ferment

Cadorette, *From the Heart*, 75.

Cadorette, *From the Heart*, 75-76.

Gutiérrez, "*Entrevista con* Gustavo Gutiérrez," interview by Luis Peirano, *Quehacer* (March 1980), 115; quoted in Cadorette, *From the Heart*, 76.

Cadorette, From the Heart, 84.

among the people who were discontent with their oppression. Gutierrez was also exposed to the theory of dependency and the works of thinkers like Freire, Arguedas, and Mariategui. Together, all these different factors helped provide Gutierrez with a new perspective with which he could re-examine the theological training he got in Europe.

1.3 Vatican II and Populorum Progressio

Having discussed Gutierrez's period of European study and the reality of Peru and Latin America upon his return, we now turn to a discussion of Gutierrez's early theological efforts as he integrated the insights and experiences of the first two stages with theological insights gained from the Second Vatican Council and the papal encyclical *Populorum Progressio*. Gutierrez sought to answer some basic questions: What is theology? What does salvation mean, and how does salvation relate to the building up of a just world? How is the church related to the world? In this section, two works by Gutiérrez show how he integrated and developed the new possibilities of these church teachings in light of his European theological training and his experiences in Peru. The first work to be considered is Gutiérrez's first major published work, *Lineas* pastorales de la iglesia en America Latina,⁵¹ in which Gutiérrez examines the various ways the relation of the church to the world has been conceived especially in Latin America. The second work is Gutierrez's "Toward a Theology of Liberation." This seminal work shows Gutierrez's effort to fashion a theology for Latin America in light of the political, economic, and social situation in Peru.

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This work was first published in 1968, though it began as a series of talks in 1964. See Martinez, *Confronting the Mystery*, 288 n. 86.

1.3.1 Lineas pastorales de la iglesia en America Latina

Gutiérrez discusses in this work what he considers the four major models of pastoral activity operative throughout the Catholic Church's history in Latin America. In the spirit of Vatican II, Gutiérrez also seriously ponders what it means to be Christian in the modern world, but in his case, this is further specified as his own Latin-American situation, with all that is unique about it. 52 Apart from discussing the four models, Gutiérrez also discusses in this work what he understands theology to be, and here the influence of his European theological training shines forth clearly.

Gutiérrez first describes theology as a form of knowledge, noting its relation to philosophy and the sciences, but maintaining its distinctiveness. Gutiérrez then goes on to look at the different functions theology has played in the history of the church, from the spirituality of monastic theology to the scientific bent of scholastic theology. He then comes to what he considers theology's main role (and a crucial idea in the development of liberation theology) – the idea of critical reflection on praxis in the light of God's word. For Gutiérrez, praxis comes first. Theology, which is a reflection on this praxis, constitutes a second act.⁵³

Gutiérrez prefaces the discussion of the four models by pointing out that a fast process of "dechristianization" is taking place within Latin America; that is, in his view, the countries of Latin America are becoming increasingly secular. He is worried about

According to Martinez, Gutiérrez understands the Second Vatican Council as a pastoral council concerned primarily with being church within the modern world. See Martinez, Confronting the Mystery,

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113.

Gutiérrez, Lineas, 11-12. Gutiérrez does not cite his sources for this understanding of theology as critical reflection on praxis in *Lineas*. However, when he further expounds upon this understanding of theology in A Theology of Liberation, he cites the influence of M. D. Chenu, Maurice Blondel, and Karl Marx. See Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [6-8, 8-9, 23-26].

the direction that the Church will take in response to this phenomenon. Thus, he presents the discussion of the four models, taking specifically the church-world relationship as his point of view, because he believes that it is necessary to reflect upon this relationship as contained in these models precisely so that the church's response might be directed wisely.⁵⁴

The first model discussed by Gutiérrez is what he terms "Christendom." Gutiérrez argues that Christendom is not primarily a mental construct. Rather, it is a historical reality – indeed, it represents the longest epoch in Christian history.

Christendom was the model regnant from the time of Constantine up to the time of the secularization, or dechristianization, of society in the Modern Age. In fact, Gutiérrez notes that this model is still operative in Latin America today. Gutiérrez notes that in this model, to be human means to be Christian. He supports this argument by citing the example of the Middle Ages, where the union of Church and State was so strong that to be heretical also meant that one was a social outcast or dissident. Acceptance in society meant that one had to be Christian. The Inquisition is a product of this mentality. He goes on to note that this mentality also served, at least partly, as a justification for the colonization of Latin America. In this colonization, the union of the religious and political spheres is quite evident.

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Virgilio Ojoy carefully studies the four models of *Lineas* in *Marxism & Religion: A Fusion of Horizons* (Manila, Philippines: University of Santo Tomas, 2001), 268-274. Martinez does likewise in *Confronting the Mystery*, 113-118. McAfee Brown presents a brief summary of *Lineas* in *Gustavo Gutiérrez: An Introduction to Liberation Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990), 185-186. Other commentators discuss Gutiérrez's models as they are presented in *A Theology of Liberation*. See Muskus, *Origins and Earl Developments*, 90-96; cf. William Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist*, Challenges in Contemporary Theology, (Oxford and Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 177-180.

See also Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, [34-35, 53-54, 71-73].

Gutiérrez, *Lineas*, 14.

⁵⁷ Gutiérrez, *Lineas*, 15.

Gutiérrez enumerates four characteristics of the Christendom model.⁵⁸ First, the baptized are considered believers, regardless of how they act. The non-baptized are nonbelievers, also regardless of how they live their lives, whether marked by charity or not. Conversion is identified with membership in the institutional church.⁵⁹ Second. sacramental participation is seen as the guarantee of salvation, and is considered much more important than external moral practice. ⁶⁰ Gutiérrez explains that this results from a misuse of the principle of ex opere operato. The principle was meant to guarantee that the faithful's reception of any sacrament was not dependent upon things such as the personal sanctity of the priest. This is a good and important liturgical principle. However, if taken to an extreme, this principle results in an imbalanced view that overly emphasizes the validity of reception and tends to minimize, if not altogether neglect, the fruitfulness of the reception of the sacrament for the faith-life of the recipient.⁶¹ Third, Gutiérrez points out that in this model, there is a strong union of church and state. 62 Fourth, Gutiérrez notes that in this model, there is a strong emphasis on the modality of the ecclesial community as parish. The parish is seen as the grand Christianizer; that is, it serves as the witness and agent of Christ's message, and thus merits special attention. This is so because the Church is identified with the parish, for that is where the faithful

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⁵⁸ Gutiérrez, *Lineas*, 16-17.

⁵⁹ Gutiérrez, *Lineas*, 16.

Gutiérrez, *Lineas*, 17-18.

⁶¹ Gutiérrez, *Lineas*, 18.

Gutiérrez, *Lineas*, 18-19. In the Christendom model, the state tolerates no religious pluralism, but upholds the church as the sole religious institution in the society. The union of church and state was realized in Portugal under Salazar, Spain under Franco, and Italy under Mussolini.

receive the sacraments – thus, the parish is essential to Christian life. Gutiérrez does not mean to imply that parishes are not important. He notes, however, that such an understanding leads to a diminished appreciation of groups and movements which are not necessarily parish-based, such as Catholic Action. These movements are viewed with reservation precisely and simply because they are not directly connected with the parish. As such, they are not essential to Christian life since they are not essential to sacramental participation and therefore not also directly connected with salvation. Galactic descriptions of the sacramental connected with salvation.

Gutiérrez notes two possible critiques of the Christendom mentality. First, he argues that it does not correspond with the actual social reality of the present. Much has changed since the Middle Ages. The unanimity in society as regards Christianity that was prevalent then does not exist today. The church and the state are not as indissolubly linked today as they were then. Second, Gutiérrez argues that the Christendom mentality suffers from a lack of efficacy. It cannot reach everyone, for it automatically excludes those who are not of the faith – either those who were never baptized, or those who have been estranged from the faith after baptism.

Theologically, Gutiérrez analyzes the church-world relationship in terms of the view of salvation held in the model. For Christendom, the understanding as regards salvation was the tenet, taken quite literally, that "outside the Church there is no salvation." What was reigning was a juridical concept of Church. Gutiérrez notes the

Gutiérrez, *Lineas*, 19.

⁶⁴ Gutiérrez, *Lineas*, 19.

⁶⁵ Gutiérrez, *Lineas*, 20.

⁶⁶ Gutiérrez, *Lineas*, 20.

Gutiérrez, *Lineas*, 34 and ff.

definition which St. Robert Bellarmine gave in his sixteenth-century work *Disputationes* de controversiis christianae fidei, first published at Ingolstadt in 1581-93.⁶⁸ "The one and true Church is composed of the people who profess the true faith, participate in her sacraments, and live under her legitimate pastoral governance." Gutiérrez points out ironically that one could easily meet such a definition without any reference whatsoever to charity.

Gutiérrez further argues that in this theological understanding, one encounters a series of distinctions: temporal/spiritual, sacred/profane, and most importantly, natural/supernatural. An important consequence of this last distinction is a theology that favors the church's intervention in temporal affairs. The reasoning is thus: there is no neutrality before God; all that is good comes from God, and all that is evil comes from Satan. As such, there is also no neutrality before the Church, since it is God's representative here on earth. The temporal sphere has no autonomy vis-à-vis the Church.

The dechristianization of society, however, necessitated a response, and, according to Gutierrez, this situation led to the second model, "New Christendom." In this model, Christian institutions are created to act as leaven upon society – to Christianize it once again. There is a strong emphasis on the creation of institutions with a particular focus on the struggle for justice, respect for rights, and human fellowship. As such, and in contrast with Christendom, these institutions are seen as not having just a religious end, but a human one as well. Gutiérrez gives the example of the Catholic

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert Bellarmine

⁶⁹ Gutiérrez, *Lineas*, 34.

See also Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [35-36, 54-56, 73-76].

Gutiérrez, *Lineas*, 21.

university. This institution is not meant solely for catechesis but is also an institution for the cultural formation of professionals. Gutiérrez notes, though, that these human ends still bear the mark of the Christian context in which they are found.⁷³ Ultimately. the real goal is still the consecration of the world – the creation of a society which is conducive or favorable to Christianity. Gutiérrez warns, then, of the danger of reducing Christianity to an ideology, that is, to a political and social worldview. This danger is evident in the formation of Christian political parties, as there may be a resultant tendency to equate Christianity with the policies and ideology, or worldview, of that party.74

Theologically, the emphasis in this model is an understanding that grace builds upon or perfects nature. This view enabled the crafting of a political philosophy which precisely allowed for human, and not just supernatural, ends. The temporal sphere's autonomy is asserted, but asserted especially in relation to the ecclesiastical hierarchy. What is intended is to prevent the church from interfering in matters not within its sphere of competence. While the church's power vis-à-vis the temporal sphere is thus modified, the church itself continues to remain in the center of the salvation process. It is seen as the repository of the plenitude of grace. The tenet "Outside the church there is no salvation" still holds sway, even though it is now modified by allowing for the possibility of "baptisms by desire." While the goal in New Christendom in terms of salvation is not necessarily to baptize everyone and make all members of the institutional church, the

⁷² Gutiérrez, Lineas, 23.

⁷³ Gutiérrez, Lineas, 23.

⁷⁴ Gutiérrez, Lineas, 26-27. See also Martinez, Confronting the Mystery, 115.

goal remains the creation of a society favorable to Christianity, conducive for people to want to be Christian.⁷⁵

In the third model, which Gutierrez calls "Mature Faith," the plan to Christianize society involves, not the creation of Christian institutions as in New Christendom, but rather the active involvement of Christians within already existing civic and social institutions in the temporal sphere. This form of the Christian life involves a mature faith on the part of the Christian, a faith that is not just passively received from the tradition but is actively and personally appropriated. As such, this faith is embraced by the person and becomes operative as a dynamic principle in that person's life. The person then seeks to follow Christ as an active disciple. While Gutiérrez notes the advantages this model has over the New Christendom model, he acknowledges the difficulty of actually achieving such a mature faith among the majority of Latin Americans. The main target of the model would be the members of certain specialized groups like Catholic Action. Gutiérrez concedes that this target is a minority, and that the goal is impossible to achieve for the majority. ⁷⁶

This model finds its theological grounding in the theology of the distinction of planes.⁷⁷ In this theology, as the name implies, a distinction is made between the natural and supernatural planes. The natural plane includes such realities as society and politics. The church itself, evangelization, and movements like Catholic Action, belong in the supernatural plane.⁷⁸ This theology allows for a real autonomy of the temporal sphere in

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Gutiérrez, Lineas, 40-49. See also Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [35-36, 54-56, 73-76].

Gutiérrez, *Lineas*, 27-29.

Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, [36-38, 56-58, 76-80]. In fact, the model is described in *A Theology of Liberation* under the heading "distinction of planes."

relation to the church. The building up of the world is seen as a human endeavor; it is not the responsibility of the church per se. ⁷⁹ As such, much greater importance is placed on history and human freedom. What all humans do as regards creating a better world has value, regardless of whether they are members of the institutional church or not. Thus, religious freedom is considered a human right – as Gutiérrez points out in mentioning Vatican II's *Dignitatis Humanae*. ⁸⁰

Gutiérrez further clarifies the distinction between natural and supernatural by describing the respective roles of the clergy and the laity. The priest's mission is that of the church: the proclamation of the Gospel (evangelization) and the enriching of the temporal sphere (humanization). He is not to be involved in political action, as such would be beyond his sphere of competence. The layperson, on the other hand, has as her or his responsibility the building up of both the church and the world. In other words, the laity must work for a more just and humane society, which necessarily includes overt political action.

Martinez, Confronting the Mystery, 116 and 289.

Gutiérrez, *Lineas*, 50-61. See also Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 36-38.

Gutiérrez, Lineas, 54. Herminio Rico, in his book John Paul II and the Legacy of Dignitatis Humanae (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002), studies the reception of DH from the time of the council up to the present, especially by John Paul II. Rico argues that there have been three distinct "moments" in which different issues dominated the perception of the role of the Church in the world, and that these moments helped define the Church's official understanding of religious freedom. In the first moment, the Church's main preoccupation was its relation to liberal democracies – this was during the time DH was actually written. The second moment deals with the Church's (especially John Paul II's) preoccupation with resisting atheistic totalitarian governments. Finally, the third moment deals with the present time's preoccupation with confronting secularism and moral relativism. Rico's analysis enables us to highlight a lacuna in the Church's official understanding of DH, and concomitantly, its understanding of the Church-world relationship. The first and third moments correspond roughly with concerns of the first world (developed countries), while the second moment corresponds with the Church's struggle against the second world (communism). The third world (developing countries), particularly those which are very Catholic such as the Philippines and the countries in Latin America, do not have a "moment." As such, the unique nature of the Church-world relationship in these third world contexts does not get as much attention in the Church's official understanding. Gutiérrez's theology, written precisely from this context and for these peoples, caters specifically to this problem.

The fourth model, the "Prophetic Pastoral," does not seek to react against its predecessor but rather to take it one step farther. The Mature Faith model targets a minority and is impossible to attain for the majority, the non-persons (the people who lack rights and a voice in society). The Prophetic Pastoral model precisely seeks to include these non-persons. It radicalizes pastoral action by emphasizing the social requirements of the gospel, which for Gutiérrez both demands the denunciation of the church supporting the unjust social order, as well as supporting positive revolutionary processes in Latin America. Gutiérrez notes that this model is still tentative, and he acknowledges the possible dangers of reductionism and hence loss of Christian identity. Reductionism, that is, the identification of the Gospel with a vision of social progress, may occur if the Christian faith is related directly to political action. Such a direct identification risks the loss of what makes the Christian faith distinct from other positions.

This development from the third to the fourth model is significant for the development of the theology of liberation. Theologically, it is founded upon the movement Gutiérrez makes from the distinction of planes to something akin to Rahner's "supernatural existential." Gutiérrez view is similar to Rahner's understanding that salvation and grace are available to all, even those outside the institutional church. Salvation is not dependent upon explicit faith because salvation has been offered to all in

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Gutiérrez, *Lineas*, 29-31.

As the *Theological Dictionary by Karl Rahner and Herbert Vorgrimler*, ed. Cornelius Ernst, O.P., trans. Richard Strachen (New York: Herder and Herder, 1965), 161, explains the supernatural existential: "antecedently to justification by grace, received sacramentally or extra-sacramentally, man is already subject to the universal salvific will of God, he is already redeemed and absolutely obliged to tend to his supernatural end. This 'situation' is not merely an external one; it is an objective, ontological modification of man, added indeed to his nature by God's grace and therefore supernatural, but in fact never lacking in the real order. It follows that even in the rejection of grace and in perdition a man can never be ontologically and subjectively unaffected by the inner figure of his supernatural destiny."

Christ. Salvation, rather, is dependent upon one's response in genuine charity to this offer of grace. The church's mission, then, for Gutiérrez, is to announce the presence of this salvific grace in history, and to judge this history based on its fidelity or lack thereof to God's word. Thus, the church's praxis, its very way of being and acting in the world, must be prophetic.83

Gutierrez's thoughts here are quite similar to Karl Rahner who understands the human to be the "event of God's free and forgiving self-communication." Gutiérrez goes beyond Rahner, however. For Gutierrez, it is precisely the human who is the event of God's free and forgiving self-communication; all of humanity. This must necessarily include even non-Christians. For Gutiérrez, it includes the poor especially. If salvation is not identified with explicit belief or membership in the visible Church, then in that sense, the concrete challenge is not that of the non-believer. The challenge is precisely that of the poor. For if indeed it is the human who is the event of God's free and forgiving self-communication, then the concrete challenge to be addressed is that which dehumanizes, such as the poverty and oppression in places like Latin America. In sum, then, the challenge is not that which threatens the explicit belief of people but rather that which threatens their humanity.⁸⁵

This progression from the third to the fourth model most clearly demonstrates the decisive roles played by European theology and the Peruvian situation to the development of Gutiérrez's liberation theology. Upon his return to Peru, Gutiérrez was appointed national ecclesiastical assistant to the UNEC, the Peruvian organization of

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83 Gutiérrez, Lineas, 70.

Karl Rahner, Foundations of Christian Faith (New York: Crossroad, 1978), 116-137.

85 Gutiérrez, Lineas, 62-84.

Catholic students, along the lines of Catholic Action. To various UNEC groups, Gutiérrez presented the theology of the distinction of planes in various talks in 1960. This was important, because for Gutiérrez, the deficiencies of both Christendom and New Christendom were not palatable in terms of the lack of autonomy they provided the temporal sphere. The church-world relationship was too close. The aforementioned reality of oppressive poverty soon made it apparent to Gutiérrez, however, that this theology of the "distinction of planes" was not adequate in addressing the Peruvian situation either. The church-world relationship was too distant.

In reflecting upon his Latin-American world, Gutiérrez was able to articulate the beginnings of an adequate understanding of the church-world relationship, viewed from the perspective of the possibility and meaning of salvation. Gutiérrez took the theological understanding he learned in Europe and looked afresh at his Peruvian reality. The result is a theology that seeks to address the challenges brought by the non-person. Salvation is not to be understood simply as membership in the institutional church. Salvation also necessarily meant addressing that which dehumanizes people, such as the oppression and injustice in Latin America. It is a theology in the spirit of Vatican II; it seeks to reflect on being the community of Jesus' disciples in the world, in particular, in the Latin-American world. The questions asked are not simply those regarding unbelief, but also the inhumane oppression under which far too many labor. The answers, thus, are different. The result is not a European theology; it is the Latin-American theology of liberation – or at least, its beginnings.

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Martinez, Confronting the Mystery, 116.

1.3.2 "Toward a Theology of Liberation"

While the preceding discussion already includes many distinctive elements of what has come to be known as the theology of liberation of Latin America, it is only in 1968 that this theology was truly born, at least in Gutiérrez's opinion. In 1968, a conference was held in Chimbote, Peru where Gutiérrez presented "Toward a Theology of Liberation," a paper from which this new theological movement eventually got its name. In this treatise, as the name itself indicates, Gutiérrez outlined what he considered to be the basic elements of a theology aimed at the integral liberation of humanity. This presentation, further, and most clearly, shows the influence of both Vatican II and *Populorum Progressio* on Gutiérrez's thought.

"Toward a Theology of Liberation" has four parts. The first is an Introduction wherein Gutiérrez presents his understanding of what theology is, as he first delineated in *Lineas Pstorales*. He begins with what he calls the classic meaning of theology – an intellectual understanding of the faith. He immediately goes on to add, however, that faith involves far more than merely understanding truths. Faith calls for an "existential stance, an attitude, a commitment to God and to human beings." Theology, then, necessitates an understanding of this commitment, in the light of God's revelation.

Gutiérrez proceeds to outline three characteristics of theology. First, theology is a "progressive and continuous understanding, which is variable to some extent." Because theology includes the awareness of an existential stance, it is a reflection on a historical

Brown, Gustavo Gutiérrez, 25.

Gutiérrez, "Toward a Theology of Liberation," 63.

Gutiérrez, "Toward a Theology of Liberation," 63.

Gutiérrez, "Toward a Theology of Liberation," 63.

commitment; since this is the case, the context of the commitment is also to be considered in theology. Moreover, a historical context is never a static reality. Further, theology is always a second act because it is precisely a reflection upon a commitment. The commitment is always the first act. Finally, since theology ordains a way of life, it is "an endeavor that must continuously accompany that commitment." This reflection is necessary so that a person's commitment does not become activism which is unreflected upon, and hence not guided by divine revelation. Gutiérrez concludes this introductory section by citing *Gaudium et Spes*, especially concerning the need to be attentive to the "signs of the times." Since theology deals with the reflection upon a historical commitment, theology must be attendant to the nuances and exigencies of the particular context in which one finds one's self. Gutierrez explains: "If faith is a commitment to God and human beings, it is not possible to live in today's world without a commitment to the process of liberation... (because) the process of liberation is a sign of the times."

The second section of "Toward a Theology of Liberation" deals with "The Statement of the Question." Gutiérrez begins by stating that "the gospel is primarily a message of salvation." However, "the construction of the world is a task for human beings on this earth." The question facing a theology of liberation then is, "What relationship is there between the construction of this world and salvation?"

Gutiérrez criticizes a view of salvation that focuses excessively on the hereafter to the diminution of the value of the present life. He notes that such a view was pretty much the norm prior to Vatican II, and it left Christianity validly open to the well-known

Gutiérrez, "Toward a Theology of Liberation," 64.

Gutiérrez, "Toward a Theology of Liberation," 64.

Gutiérrez, "Toward a Theology of Liberation," 65.

Marxist critique that religion is merely an opiate for the masses. Gutiérrez says that the church has reached a new consciousness, one that was adopted by Vatican II, in which history is given more value and viewed as more than just a "test" wherein we either save or condemn ourselves.

Gutiérrez cites two reasons for this change of understanding. First, he points to the rise of science in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Prior to this, nature was viewed as a reflection of the divine glory, and thus given pretty much the same reverent fear proper to God. With the Enlightenment, nature is seen as dominated by human beings especially through science and technology. Gutiérrez quotes *Gaudium et Spes*: "Many benefits once looked for, especially from heavenly powers, man has now enterprisingly procured for himself" (GS #33).

This insight leads to the second reason Gutiérrez cites for the change in the notion of salvation vis-à-vis history: the realization "that the human person has become the agent of his or her own destiny and the one responsible for his or her own development in history." He traces the evolution of this understanding from Descartes, to Kant, to Hegel. To illustrate the point, he cites the image used by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin of people being in the hold of a ship but not knowing they were on a ship. One day, someone climbed aboard and this newcomer informed everyone that they were living in a vessel on the sea. Now, the people no longer needed to simply allow the ship to drift; they could pilot it. Humanity no longer sees itself as drifting in history, but rather as directing the course of history. 95

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Gutiérrez, "Toward a Theology of Liberation," 67.

Gutiérrez, "Toward a Theology of Liberation," 68.

For Gutiérrez, in light of the new awareness of history, people now face the question of liberation, of human emancipation throughout history. It is no longer merely a question of the meaning of earthly action and what value is placed upon it, "but of knowing the meaning of human liberation in the perspective of faith, and what faith can say not only to human action in this world but to human liberation." It is no longer simply a question of constructing the world, but constructing a world precisely where humans are truly free. Gutiérrez places great importance here on Pope Paul VI's encyclical, *Populorum Progressio*, which he quotes:

It is a question, rather, of building a world where all persons, no matter what their race, religion, or nationality, can live a fully human life, freed from servitude imposed on them by other human beings or by natural forces over which they have no control (PP #47.)

The necessity of freeing all of humanity from all manner of servitude includes the political as well as the economic spheres. True liberation means, then, that these areas must be addressed. Gutiérrez says that we are moving from "a theology that concentrated excessively on a God located outside this world to a theology of a God who is present in this world." The liberation theology of Latin America must answer the question: What is the relationship between human emancipation – social, political, and economic – and the coming of the Kingdom of God?

The third section of "Toward a Theology of Liberation" focuses on "Human Liberation and Salvation." Gutiérrez begins this section by noting how the church's official understanding matured from Vatican II to *Populorum Progressio*. First, he quotes Gaudium et Spes #34: "Throughout the course of the centuries, human beings

Gutiérrez, "Toward a Theology of Liberation," 68.

Gutiérrez, "Toward a Theology of Liberation," 68.

have labored to better the circumstances of their lives through a monumental amount of individual and collective effort. To believers, this point is settled: such human activity is in accord with God's will." As Gutiérrez notes, this text indicates that all things people do is a response to God's will. He then points out how *Populorum Progressio* takes this idea further. "In the design of God, all human beings are called upon to develop and fulfill themselves, for every life is a vocation (*Populorum Progressio* #15)." Gutiérrez understands the word "develop" here to mean liberation, which for him includes, as mentioned earlier, even the economic sphere. Thus the Christian vocation, which is ultimately to be in communion with God, includes the necessity of securing political and economic emancipation. Development then is not simply something undertaken in order to prepare people to receive the Good News. Development is not "pre-evangelization." On the contrary, it "is situated within one's vocation and thus of one's communion with God."98 Gutiérrez considers this the new theological contribution of *Populorum Progressio.* The world is now understood as not merely a "test." Rather the work of constructing the world, of the development of humanity, has a salvific value since it is part of our vocation as children of God. Gutiérrez makes a strong conclusion to this section: "Everything which makes a person more human and contributes to human liberation, contains the value of salvation and communion with the Lord. In other words, and this vocabulary is new in the church, integral development is salvation."99

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Gutiérrez, "Toward a Theology of Liberation," 69.

Gutiérrez, "Toward a Theology of Liberation," 70. Gutiérrez seems to be making quite a leap here by equating integral development to salvation. Given the brevity of the essay itself, however, I understand that he may not have had ample opportunity to explain his position. He does so more than adequately in *A Theology of Liberation*, as we will see in the next chapter.

It is at this point that Gutiérrez develops his understanding of liberation as a single process with three interdependent dimensions, and he credits *Populorum Progressio*, no. 21. 100 Specifically, *Populorum Progressio* #21 speaks of the need for moving from "less human" conditions to "more human" conditions. Less human conditions include the "lack of material necessities" as well as "oppressive social structures." More human conditions include not just passage from this oppression but also the "growth of knowledge" and the "acquisition of culture." More human conditions also include "cooperation for the common good, the will and desire for peace" as well as "faith, a gift of God accepted by the good will of human beings and unity in the charity of Christ, who calls us all to share in the life of the giving God, the Father of all." Gutiérrez concludes that genuine liberation, as a move from less human conditions to more human conditions, should include not just economic and political liberation, but also liberation for the creation of a new humanity in a new society. Moreover, this liberation is only possible through God's grace calling us into communion with each other and with God. Thus Gutierrez defines liberation as a single complex process with three interdependent dimensions; and this definition is central to the discussion in subsequent chapters.

The last section of "Toward a Theology of Liberation" deals with "The Encounter with God in History." Gutiérrez begins by quoting *Gaudium et Spes* #45: "The Lord is the goal of human history, the focal point of the longings of history and of civilization, the center of the human race, the joy of every heart, and the answer to all its yearnings." Gutierrez sees history as the progressive revelation of God to humanity, climaxing in Jesus Christ. In Christ, God encounters humankind in an unprecedented way. Just as

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Gutiérrez, "The Truth Shall Make You Free," *The Truth Shall Make You Free*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990), 119.

importantly, in Christ, humans encounter God in an unparalleled way. Christ is the climax and central point of all history. Therefore, faith in Christ entails historical commitment

Faith in Christ also radicalizes this commitment. Gutierrez emphasizes this by citing Matthew 25:31-46, the parable of the Last Judgment. In this parable, Jesus identifies himself with the neighbor, the least of his sisters and brothers. Christ says that what we do to others, we do to him. Therefore, faith in Christ requires a radical commitment to the neighbor. However, faith also:

relativizes every human work, because it prevents me from being content with what I am doing or what others are doing. Faith will continually move me further ahead. If God is before us, our journey will never cease. To a certain extent, a Christian remains unsatisfied, for the process of human liberation is never ending. ¹⁰¹

Gutiérrez explains that this dialectical interplay of the radicalization and relativization of our historical task prevents us from becoming overly content with our efforts and enables us to undertake these efforts with the requisite seriousness. Here, he goes back to *Gaudium et Spes* # 43, and observes that the document insists that "faith leads us to take our worldly task with great seriousness" and that earthly affairs are not "divorced from religious life." ¹⁰²

In this third stage of the development of Gutiérrez's theology, two of his key texts were examined. In *Lineas pastorales de la iglesia en America Latina*, Gutiérrez began his reflections with the notion that theology should serve the life of the church. These reflections led Gutierrez to a new model for articulating the church-world relationship in light of Vatican II advancements and his dissatisfaction with current Latin American

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Gutiérrez, "Toward a Theology of Liberation," 75.

Gutiérrez, "Toward a Theology of Liberation," 75.

models. An examination of "Toward a Theology of Liberation" showed that Gutierrez developed his theology by applying *Gaudium et Spes* and *Populorum Progressio* to the Latin American context. By doing so, he arrived at the resulting theology that understands liberation as a single complex process with three interdependent dimensions that need to be understood as a unity, without confusion.

1.4 Medellín

Another key event happened in 1968 which marked a significant stage in the development of the theology of liberation. This event was the Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops held in Medellín, Colombia. Gutiérrez has described Medellín as leaving "an indelible mark on the life of the Latin American Church and society." For Gutierrez, Medellín was not simply an event that began on August 26, 1968 and ended 11 days later. According to the Gutierrez, Medellín was "a result, and a point of departure, of the journey of a people and a Church." Knowing this view, let us consider how Gutiérrez's theology fed into the meeting at Medellín, and how the meeting at Medellín confirmed and gave impetus to Gutiérrez's theology.

As seen above, Gutierrez embraced the Second Vatican Council's turn to history, in his case the Latin American people and their historical situation of poverty and oppression. Attention to his people's suffering led to a rejection of a dualistic understanding of salvation in favor of a more integral view of liberation. This three-dimensional view of liberation necessitates a historical commitment to work against all

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Gutiérrez, "The Meaning and Scope of Medellín," 59. For other commentaries on Medellín and Gutiérrez's theology, see McAfee Brown, *Introduction*, 11-14. See also Martinez, *Confronting the Mystery*, 106-113 and 126-127.

Gutiérrez, "The Meaning and Scope of Medellín," 59.

forms of oppression. Medellin adopted all these themes in its conciliar documents, as shall now be discussed.

In its "Introduction to the Final Documents," the council states that it "has chosen as the central theme of its deliberations the Latin Americans who are living in a decisive moment of their historical process." This focus on the Latin American people is not an evasion of the subject of God, but is in fact a prerequisite. The bishops write that "in order to know God, it is necessary to know humanity." This reflection on the situation of the Latin American people reveals the tremendous suffering and oppression going on in the region. Throughout the conciliar documents one finds numerous references to the injustices being suffered by the majority of Latin Americans.

To this people undergoing such massive suffering, the council wishes to bring the Good News of salvation. But Medellin warns that in "the search for salvation we must avoid the dualism which separates temporal tasks from the work of sanctification." While acknowledging that historical progress is not to be confused with the Kingdom of God, the council adamantly proclaims that its "mission is to contribute to the integral advancement of humankind and of human communities of the continent."

Therefore, the council views the mission of the Latin American church as one of liberation, understood as having three dimensions. The first dimension is socio-political and economic liberation. The bishops write:

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Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops, "Introduction to the Final Documents," no. 1, in Hennelly, pp. 94-95.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 95.

Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops, "Justice," no. 5, in Hennelly, p. 99.

Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops, "Message to the Peoples of Latin America" in Hennelly, p. 91.

The Latin American church has a message for all persons on this continent who "hunger and thirst after justice." The very God who creates human beings in the divine image and likeness, creates the "earth and all that is in it for the use of all humans and all nations, in such a way that created good can reach all in a more just manner," and gives them power to transform and perfect the world in solidarity. It is the same God who, in the fullness of time, sends the Son in the flesh, so that he might come to liberate all persons from the slavery to which sin has subjected them: hunger, misery, oppression and ignorance – in a word, that injustice and hatred which have their origin in human selfishness. ¹⁰⁹

In this passage, the bishops identify as sin realities such as injustice and oppression. The hunger and misery that afflict so many in Latin America are against the will of God who desires all to have a sufficiency of the goods of the earth. Genuine liberation demands that people be freed from whatever oppresses them in the socio-political or economic spheres.

In fact, Medellin defines the situation of oppression in Latin America as violence. The bishops write that "in many instances Latin America finds itself faced with a situation of injustice that can be called institutionalized violence." For peace to be achieved, the situation of injustice must be addressed. However, this task entails more than just the "simple absence of violence and bloodshed." What is required is the continual creation of a new society characterized by justice. It is only within such a new world order that "persons can fulfill themselves as human beings, where their dignity is respected, their legitimate aspirations satisfied, their access to truth recognized, their personal freedom guaranteed; an order where persons are not objects but agents of their

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Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops, "Justice" no. 3, in Hennelly, p. 98.

Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops, "Peace" no. 16, in Hennelly, p. 110.

¹¹¹ Ibid., no. 14, in Hennelly, p. 109.

own history." This then is the second dimension of liberation: the creation of a new humanity in a new society characterized by justice and freedom.

In addition, the bishops write that peace "is the expression of true fellowship" among human beings, a union given by Christ, prince of peace, in reconciling all persons with the Father. Human solidarity cannot truly take effect unless it is done in Christ, who gives peace that the world cannot give." ¹¹³ The bishops acknowledge that the goal of peace, communion, and solidarity can only be achieved through grace. In the final analysis, genuine liberation necessitates a third dimension: the liberation from sin, which is at the root of all oppression. 114

Reflecting later on Medellin, Gutierrez highlights that the bishops in 1968 acknowledged the link between Christ's salvific work and efforts to liberate people from injustice and oppression. Gutiérrez describes why council understands liberation as integral:

The goal was to set Christ's salvation, with all its transforming power, at the heart of a vast historical movement of liberation. This movement cannot be limited to a supposedly exclusive liberation in the religious sphere, forgetting the other dimensions of human life. That would be a betrayal of its purpose... It is equally dangerous to reduce the message of Christ to its historical and political dimensions. That mutilation and deformation of the Gospel must be firmly rejected. 115

In presenting liberation as a three-dimensional process, Medellin was trying to avoid two dangerous extremes. On one hand, there was the danger of focusing on salvation as a spiritual reality to the detriment or exclusion of the historical suffering of the Latin

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

If the preceding quotations from the document "Peace" sound strikingly similar to Gutierrez's own theology it is because he drafted the document. See McAfee Brown, *Introduction*, 11.

¹¹⁵ Gutiérrez, "The Meaning and Scope of Medellín," 91-92.

American people. On the other hand, there was the danger of viewing salvation simply in historical terms. The presentation of liberation as a single process with three inseparable dimensions was an attempt at bringing the Gospel to bear upon the concrete situation of Latin America without reducing the Good News to mere historical progress.

According to Gutiérrez, Medellín's definition of the identity of the church in terms of the preferential option for the poor was a decisive moment for the Latin-American church. 116 Gutiérrez further argued that this identity is not just for the Latin-American Church, but also for the universal church. Medellin challenged Christians around the world to embrace an identity in which solidarity with the poor is central. For Gutiérrez, Medellín could make such a challenge because it was in a better position than Vatican II to reflect upon the reality of poverty. Latin America provided Medellín with a perspective on the contemporary world that was far less optimistic than that of Vatican II because Medellin could see first-hand the often devastating effects that so-called modern advances had on the poor people in third world countries.

Medellín was conceived initially as an attempt to read the Latin American reality in light of Vatican II. It became more than that, however, as in the end, it also became a reading of Vatican II in the light of the Latin-American reality. This reversal mirrors Gutiérrez's own theological journey from his studies in Europe until his return to Peru. Gutiérrez looked at his Peruvian reality through the lens of his new European theology, but his reflections on this very reality led to a re-reading and re-crafting of his theology in light precisely of his context, where poverty and oppression were such central and everyday realities.

¹¹⁶ Gutiérrez, "The Meaning and Scope of Medellín," 61-62.

Medellín confirmed Gutiérrez's theology. What Gutiérrez did as regards his

European theology and the situation in his native Peru runs parallel to what Medellín did
as regards Vatican II and Latin America. Gutiérrez was a key figure behind Medellín; he
was involved in the actual crafting of the conference's documents. The understanding of
liberation as a single process with three interdependent dimensions, which Gutiérrez first
began to articulate in "Toward a Theology of Liberation," fed into and was confirmed by
Medellín. Finally, the positions Medellín ended up taking concerning the church and the
poor and the need to take up a preferential option for the poor closely echo Gutiérrez's
own positions. Beyond confirmation, however, Medellín gave Gutiérrez's theology
further momentum. Medellín was a theological statement made by the Latin American
Church. It was a resource to which Gutiérrez would often turn as he further developed
his theology.

Conclusion

This chapter considered the beginnings and the early development of Gustavo Gutiérrez's theology of liberation. A discussion of four key stages outlined the role each played in this development: his theological studies in Europe, his subsequent return to his native Peru, his appropriation of Vatican II and *Populorum Progressio*, and the Episcopal Conference at Medellín. *La Nouvelle Theologie* provided Gutiérrez with a theological framework, especially with its focus on the turn to history, existential commitment, and the overcoming of a dualistic understanding of the nature/supernature relation, which he still continues to use. Some of this influence was seen in *Lineas pastorales de la iglesia en America Latina* where Gutiérrez presented an analysis of the

ways of articulating the church-world relationship in his native Latin America. Of particular importance is the movement's anthropological turn, or turn to history. In this sense, Gutiérrez's theology has embraced modernity, but he goes beyond this turn. Given the dire situation of poverty and injustice in his native Peru, he re-examines his theological understanding. The questions asked in Europe are not the same as the ones asked in Latin America. Thus, he turns now not just to the believing subject, but to the subject understood to be the poor. A study of Gutierrez's early article "Toward a Theology of Liberation," shows how both Vatican II and *Populorum Progressio* influenced Gutiérrez's position and contributed to his theology. These early beginnings of what will later be known as Gutierrez's Latin American theology of liberation were then confirmed at the episcopal conference at Medellin.

Gutiérrez's theology is clearly in continuity with the theologies from which it flows – both the European theology he studied, as well as the teaching of the church (in Vatican II and *Populorum Progressio* in particular). But there is discontinuity as well. Gutiérrez's sensitivity to his different context, marked by massive poverty, leads him to ask different questions and to re-make the European theology he learned. He looks at his situation with the eyes of the teaching of the Church, and at the same time looks again at this teaching in light of his own situation. What results is a renewed way of doing theology – Gutierrez's theology of liberation. Central to this renewed theology is the understanding of the relation between salvation and the building up of the world in terms of liberation, understood as a single complex process with three interdependent dimensions. The next chapter shows just how important this understanding of liberation

is to Gutiérrez's theology, as he fully articulates his renewed approach to theology in his classic and central text, *A Theology of Liberation*.

CHAPTER 2

UTOPIA: THE KEY TO UNDERSTANDING A THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION

Introduction

The previous chapter showed how Gustavo Gutierrez articulated a way of doing theology that was responsive to the dire situation in his native context. A key insight of this theology was the understanding of liberation as a complex process with three interrelated dimensions: 1) economic and political emancipation, 2) the creation of a new humanity in a new society characterized by freedom and justice, and 3) freedom from sin for communion with God and with each other. This chapter demonstrates that central to this concept of liberation is the notion of utopia -- the envisioning of a more just and humane society.

Gustavo Gutierrez's vision of a future society necessarily involves a tacit denunciation of the prevailing political and economic system in Latin America, marked as it is with oppression and injustice. It also necessarily involves an implicit annunciation that this future society can and will be built. As such, this vision must include actively working to bringing about a more humane world. It is radically subversive of the existing order. In a society where people are led to believe that their poverty is the natural order of things, or is their God-given destiny, Gutierrez and other

liberation theologians are impelled to unmask the ideological apparatus which lies at the very root of oppressive social, political, and economic systems. They cling to and proclaim the truth that God has spoken definitively in Christ, even if the reigning powers seek to silence this truth. This hope-filled vision of a possible just society is what Gutiérrez refers to as utopia and is a central notion to his theology. Indeed, if one wishes to understand Gutierrez's theology, one must appreciate Gutierrez's idea of utopia and grasp how this idea functions in Gutierrez's thought.

Chapter One of this dissertation examined the beginnings and early development of Gustavo Gutiérrez's theology of liberation. It looked at the key influences that led to the creation of this new way of doing theology: the influence of European theology, the oppressive poverty in Gutiérrez's own context of Latin America, theological advances expressed in the documents of Vatican II and in *Populorum Progressio*, and the Latin American episcopal conference at Medellín in 1968.

This chapter takes a closer look at the culmination of these early developments in Gutiérrez's theology – the groundbreaking book from which the movement itself got its name, *A Theology of Liberation*. This work is central to Gutiérrez's theology not only because it is his first major work, and the one most associated with him, but also because it expresses insights and intuitions that remain operative in important and significant

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Quite a number of authors have written about Gutiérrez's theology in general and *A Theology of Liberation* in particular. I consider Gaspar Martinez, *Confronting the Mystery of God: Political, Liberation, and Public Theologies* (New York and London: Continuum, 2001), 89-151, to be the most helpful as a general overview of Gutiérrez's thought. An excellent, though relatively brief overview of Gutiérrez's theology can be found in the introduction written by James Nickoloff, ed., *Gustavo Gutierrez: Essential Writings* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 1-22. An even briefer though no less useful summary can be found in Leonardo Boff, "The Originality of the Theology of Liberation," in *The Future of Liberation Theology: Essays in Honor of Gustavo Gutiérrez* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989), 38-48. An excellent introduction to Latin American liberation theology is *Mysterium liberationis: fundamental concepts of liberation theology*, ed. Ignacio Ellacuria and Jon Sobrino (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993). For a more global perspective, see *Lift Every Voice: Constructing Christian Theology from the Underside*, ed. Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite and Mary Potter Engel, rev. ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998).

ways in Gutiérrez's subsequent books, as will become evident in chapter three of this dissertation. These later works do not contradict *A Theology of Liberation*'s groundbreaking insights; rather, they build upon and further develop them. Put in another way, these subsequent works are not replacements to *A Theology of Liberation*, they are sequels. *A Theology of Liberation* retains pride of place among Gutiérrez's writings.

This chapter sheds light on *A Theology of Liberation* by looking closely at a key and central notion in this book: the notion of utopia. To understand truly *A Theology of Liberation*, one must understand what Gutiérrez means by utopia. This thesis comes with a necessary corollary – that to misunderstand Gutiérrez's notion of utopia, or to neglect its central importance in his theology, risks misunderstanding what Gutiérrez is saying. 119

The centrality and importance of the notion of utopia in *A Theology of Liberation* can easily be missed by a casual -- perhaps even by a careful – reader of the book. This oversight is possible because Gutiérrez himself only explicitly treats the topic in detail in a six page section of chapter 11. Analysis demonstrates, however, that Gutiérrez depends upon the mediating role of the idea of utopia, an idea that is quite multifaceted in his thought, throughout all of *A Theology of Liberation*, without using the term explicitly each time.

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An excellent treatment of Gutiérrez's understanding of utopia in the context of his ecclesiology can be found in James Nickoloff, "Church of the Poor: The Ecclesiology of Gustavo Gutiérrez," *Theological Studies* 54 (1993) pp. 512-535, especially pp. 513-517. My understanding of utopia in Gutiérrez's thought is similar to Nickoloff's, though Nickoloff does not attempt to understand the whole of Gutiérrez's project from the viewpoint of utopia as I do.

The dangers of misunderstanding utopia or neglecting its importance will be the subject of chapter four of this dissertation, where I discuss some of Gutiérrez's critics.

This notion of utopia, or the vision of a more just and humane world, permeates all of *A Theology of Liberation* and this idea is implicit in all of the other topics which Gutiérrez discusses. The result is a chicken-and-egg dilemma in presenting Gutiérrez's thought. The notion of utopia is so interwoven throughout *A Theology of Liberation* that it cannot be fully understood by itself without an adequate appreciation of its role in the argument of the entire book. However, the converse is also true and is the very thesis I argue in this chapter, namely, that *A Theology of Liberation* cannot be fully understood without a clear understanding of what Gutiérrez means by utopia.

This conundrum can only be resolved through a series of somewhat artificial steps. First, this chapter will separate the notion of utopia from the rest of the book and provide an initial definition of the idea of utopia as it functions in Gutiérrez's theology. The second step, using the work of Curt Cadorette, will be to compare and contrast Gutierrez's treatment of utopia with its counterpart, the notion of ideology. Third, again drawing on Cadorette's research, will be to review some of the key influences that helped shape Gutiérrez's understanding of the notion of utopia. Fourth, a consideration of different types of utopia as identified in contemporary philosophy will locate Gutierrez's position within a broader spectrum. After all these steps are undertaken, an analysis is needed of the use of the notion of utopia within *A Theology of Liberation*. The goal is the clarification of what Gutiérrez means by utopia, the illumination of this idea's role in Gutierrez's theological argument, and, ultimately, a fresh reading of *A Theology of Liberation* itself.

2.1 An Initial Definition of the Notion of Utopia

As Christians, our ultimate goal is the "Kingdom of God." According to Jesus, the Kingdom of God is similar to a wedding banquet to which many are invited (Mt. 22: 1-14). It is the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy of a new heaven and a new earth (Is. 65: 17-25), where the lame will walk, the blind shall see, and prisoners will be set free (Lk. 4: 16-21). It is already here (Mk. 1: 15) and yet it is still invisibly maturing among us like a mustard seed (Mk. 4: 30-34). The God of this Kingdom or new community is called "Abba" or "Father" (Mt. 6: 9-15), and this God is lavish or prodigal in loving all people (Lk. 15: 11-32).

Christians want the Kingdom to come fully, in all its perfection. They acknowledge, however, that the fullness of the Kingdom comes only beyond history. The fact that humankind must wait, however, should not lead them to think that what they do in history, such as in the fields of politics or economics, does not matter. What they do in these spheres does matter – they are either further building up the Kingdom, or hindering its progress. Realizing the importance of their historical actions vis-à-vis the Kingdom should not delude them into thinking, however, that the Reign of God is their creation. They should avoid the temptation of thinking that a specific plan for taxation, agrarian reform, or health care is what will bring about the new heaven and the new earth, and that any who oppose one specific plan are necessarily hindering the growth of the Kingdom.

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Jon Sobrino explains the centrality of the concept of the Kingdom of God to liberation theology in "Central Position of the Reign of God in Liberation Theology," in *Mysterium liberationis*, 350-388. John Fuellenbach also discusses the role that the Kingdom of God plays within liberation theology, but situates this discussion within a wider understanding of the Kingdom of God. See John Fuellenbach, "Kingdom of God," in *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology*, ed. René Latourelle (New York: Crossroad, 1995), 586-594. See also Fuellenbach, *The Kingdom of God* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995).

In Gutiérrez's theology, what enables Christians to walk this fine line is the notion of utopia because it is this idea that acts as the necessary bridge between faith and political action. Utopia is not the Kingdom of God, but it is also not a description of the status quo. Without the goal of creating a utopian society, one is left with either a separation of faith from political action or a collapse of the two into an undifferentiated unity, as this chapter will demonstrate.

Given humankind's sinful condition (both personal and societal) as well as its finitude, no one can fully envision what the Kingdom of God in its perfection will be like. Nevertheless, Christians can and do have a general picture. A close look at present society shows clearly that it is not the Kingdom of God in its fullness. Thus Christians envision a better society – one where there is genuine freedom and justice, where there is solidarity amongst people and greater communion. The new humanity is where people are artisans of their own destinies, as opposed to victims of an unjust and oppressive situation. This vision is what Gutiérrez refers to when he uses the notion of utopia. "(T)he utopia of liberation as the creation of a new social consciousness... is the arena of the permanent creation of a new humanity in a different society characterized by solidarity. Therefore, that creation is the place of encounter between political liberation and the communion of all persons with God."¹²¹

As will become evident in the discussion of Gutierrez in this chapter, having this utopian vision will necessarily mean making plans and implementing them. As someone envisions a better, more egalitarian society, she or he might argue for the need for agrarian reform, more specifically, that every farmer should own at least two hectares of land. These plans may change, based on differing situations and circumstances. The

Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [139, 237, 305].

specific plans are not on the level of utopia but are the best efforts at attaining the utopia, the better society of freedom and justice that we envision, yet which is not the Kingdom of God itself in all the Kingdom's fullness.

In Chapter 2 of *A Theology of Liberation*, Gutiérrez defines what he means by the term "liberation." He distinguishes, but does not separate, three reciprocally interpenetrating levels or dimensions of meaning of the single process of liberation. Gutiérrez defines the first dimension as that which "expresses the aspirations of oppressed peoples and social classes, emphasizing the conflictual aspect of the economic, social, and political process that puts them at odds with wealthy nations and oppressive classes." This first dimension then refers to economic, political, and social liberation. The specific plans for health care or agrarian reform mentioned as examples earlier fall within this dimension of liberation.

For the second dimension of liberation, Gutiérrez applies the term liberation to a view of history where "humankind is seen as assuming conscious responsibility for its own destiny." For Gutiérrez, such an understanding provides:

a dynamic context and broadens the horizons of the desired social changes. In this perspective the unfolding of *all the dimensions of humanness* is demanded – persons who make themselves throughout their life and throughout history. The gradual conquest of true freedom leads to the *creation of a new humankind* and a qualitatively different society. This vision provides, therefore, a better understanding of what in fact is at stake in our times (emphasis added). ¹²⁵

Gutiérrez wants to emphasize that liberation should include more than just economic or political liberation. Liberation should include all dimensions of personhood. People

Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, [13-25, 21-37, 35-60].

Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [24, 36, 59].

Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [24, 36, 59].

Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [24-25, 36-37, 59].

should be truly free – crafters of their own destiny – in a truly new society where everyone is respected, has rights, and has the opportunity to contribute to the common good. Without this second dimension, a people may become enslaved, for example, to the goal of attaining higher income or an increased Gross National Product, even though this goal can be achieved only by having people work 100-hour weeks or employing children in sweatshops. Such situations, while providing greater economic benefits, do not necessarily result in greater freedom, especially if people do not feel that they are in control of their lives.

The third dimension of liberation as defined by Gutiérrez is freedom from sin and entrance into communion with God and with all persons; for him, this third dimension corresponds to faith. Liberation comes about at its deepest level as human beings are freed by God from sin. Gutiérrez argues that sin is at the root of all that oppresses us, including the economic, political, and social spheres, and that it is only through Christ in the Holy Spirit that we can be liberated from sin. Through his life, death, and resurrection, Jesus Christ has reconciled the human family with God, and now the Holy Spirit invites all people to participate in the mystery of Christ.

It must be stressed that we are not dealing here with three separate processes of liberation. There is one single, complex process of genuine liberation, that has these three interdependent dimensions and that finds its deepest meaning and full realization in the work of Christ. 127

To grasp the interrelatedness of these three dimensions of liberation, one might imagine the plight of poor people, those with barely enough money to feed themselves on

Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, [24-25, 36-37, 59-60] and [137, 235, 301-302].

Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, [137, 235, 301-302].

a daily basis. What would liberation mean for them? Surely, economic and political liberation are necessary. But would giving each of them a thousand dollars be enough? Even providing them with steady employment and guaranteeing them all the rights of the United States Bill of Rights, while certainly necessary for liberation, would not be sufficient, especially if they remain in a society that continually "creates" such poverty. For all people to be truly free, they must not only have economic and political liberation, but they must be recreated as new people -- truly artisans of their own destiny – in a new society that is characterized by solidarity and freedom where no one is poor. Can any of this happen without God's grace? Certainly not, because sin is at the root of all injustice, and it is only through Christ that sin can be overcome such that we can enter into communion with God and each other. However, liberation from sin is incomplete without freedom from its material and social effects. There are not three liberations that come successively as three separate moments; rather, there is one process of liberation that has three dimensions.

Taking a closer look at Gutiérrez's three dimensions of the single process of liberation helps clarify the notion of utopia. Social analysis may reveal that certain structures (political and economic) are unjust. This is Gutiérrez's first dimension, but it is not enough merely to change structures. If a society is to become just, its members, as well as its structures, must become just. For example, China may gain economically or socially from their one-child policy, but is it worth the lives of these millions of

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For a discussion of the use of social analysis in liberation theology, see Gutiérrez, "Theology and the Social Sciences" in *The Truth Shall Make You Free: Confrontations*, trans. Matthew O'Connell (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990), 53-84. A brief discussion is also found in Peter Phan, "Method in Liberation Theologies," *Theological Studies* 61 (2000), 42-46.

Gustavo Gutiérrez, interview by author, digital recording, Notre Dame, Indiana, 13 December 2004.

unborn children? The point Gutiérrez is making is that the first dimension of liberation is never enough – it is not sufficient merely to change structures. People must create a new humanity, in a new society inspired by the values of the Gospel. This second dimension of liberation, in other words, sees utopia as the vision of a polity, or society, that is characterized by just social, economic, and political structures and also by people who are equitable, just, and humane in their dealings with one another.

Social analysis may lead to this view of the ideal society, but, speaking theologically, this analysis is not enough. Ultimately, the root cause of all injustice is sin, and God's grace is absolutely necessary for sin to be overcome and for genuine communion to be achieved. It is only through God's love and a faithful response to it that forgiveness is received and right relationships attained with God, others, and ourselves. From a Christian's perspective, the first two dimensions of liberation are not possible without the third dimension, namely liberation (or salvation) from sin.

Without the second dimension of liberation, envisioning a new and better humanity, Christians are left with political action, on the one hand, and with faith in God's grace on the other hand. If a separation is to be posited, then the conclusion remains that faith has nothing to say as regards nuclear weapons, taxation, or wages. In the perspective of liberation theology, this is clearly unacceptable, as will be shown more clearly when *A Theology of Liberation* is discussed in greater detail later in this chapter. A direct and immediate relationship between faith and political action would have equally disastrous consequences. If this were the case, then if one's plan for garbage collection is different from another's, then one or the other must be unchristian, and hindering the full flowering of the Kingdom of God. Therefore, using the notion of

utopia as the bridge between political change and the exercise of one's faith allows for a fruitful and meaningful relationship without collapse or separation between the first and third dimensions of liberation. ¹³⁰

The notion of utopia, the ideal of a just society, allows political action a certain autonomy from faith – not in the sense that faith is no longer related to political action, but in the sense that faith does not directly dictate specific plans of action as divinely revealed. Except in extreme situations where certain political options are blatantly in conflict with its basic principles, the Gospel cannot judge whether a particular political option is necessarily right or wrong. For example, the Gospel cannot tell us how long maternity leave should be or what would constitute a just minimum wage. People make this judgment with attention to their unique contexts based upon their reason and all its resources, and guided by their utopian vision of a new and better humanity. Furthermore, their vision may change as situations and circumstances change. Nonetheless, their utopian vision will always be animated and inspired by the values of the Kingdom. Thus, their quest for a just and humane world makes it impossible for them to separate their faith from their political action.

The preceding discussion provides an initial understanding of what Gutiérrez means by the notion of utopia and will be developed and defended further below. The following sections provide some further background that help further clarify and specify this understanding.

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Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [138, 236, 302-303].

2.2 Curt Cadorette's Analysis of Utopia in Gutiérrez's Theology

Curt Cadorette provides a helpful analysis of Gutiérrez's use of the notion of utopia in his book *From the Heart of the People: The Theology of Gustavo Gutiérrez*.¹³¹ Because it will be helpful in understanding Gutiérrez's use of the notion of utopia, two parts of Cadorette's presentation will be highlighted: 1) the distinction he makes between utopia and ideology, and 2) his analysis of some of the sources which influenced Gutiérrez's understanding of utopia.

2.2.1 Utopia and Ideology

Cadorette notes that Gutiérrez, in his analysis of the Latin American context, investigates not just the role that politics and economics play, but the role of culture and religion as well. Culture and religion are deemed capable of playing either a positive or a negative role in the process of liberation. In theological terms, "culture and religion can be sinful or salvific forces depending on who uses them and for what ends." Cadorette notes that in the language of the social sciences, the equivalent terms would be the ideological or utopic power of culture and religion. He adds, however, that "ideology and utopia defy simple, unchanging definition."

How does Gutiérrez understand these terms? Cadorette states that Gutiérrez views ideology as a multifaceted process whereby the self-understanding and class-related interests of a minority are officially propagated and enforced as a

133 Cadorette, *From the Heart*, 53.

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Curt Cadorette, *From the Heart of the People: The Theology of Gustavo Gutiérrez* (Oak Park, IL: Meyer-Stone Books, 1988).

¹³² Cadorette, *From the Heart*, 53.

Cadorette, *From the Heart*, 55.

social norm with oppressive and ultimately sinful effects. The key concept to keep in mind here is "process." Ideology, like utopia, is neither a mere mental abstraction nor some sort of object. It is, rather, a set of values specific to a certain class of people that shapes their social action. ¹³⁵

In a country like Peru, therefore, the dominant elite, which is a minority, believes in the virtues and superiority of its capitalist system. Given this belief, and since they wield the power, these people exert their control over society in a way that coincides with their interests, even though their commitment to a capitalist system results in misery for the majority of Peruvians. Thus, their beliefs are ideological, according to the above understanding. ¹³⁶

Gutiérrez knows, however, that the effect of the elite's ideological apparatus on the poor is not total. The culture and religion of the poor are only "partially penetrated" by ideology. As Cadorette puts it, the poor "never totally lose their sense of uniqueness nor surrender their hope for a more just society. Here then are the ingredients or properties of the ideal society, hence of utopia's sense of personal autonomy, a vision of justice, and hope. In other words, the notion of utopia consists of the values and ideas embodied in the ideal vision of a more just society. It concerns a concrete approximation of what Christians call the Kingdom of God.

Gutiérrez insists that both ideology and the idea of utopia have meaning in the context of the social classes that are their historical subjects. Ideology and the vision of a more humane world are not entirely "objective" characteristics of social behavior; rather

Cadorette, *From the Heart*, 53-54.

¹³⁶ Cadorette, *From the Heart*, 54.

Cadorette, *From the Heart*, 54.

Cadorette, *From the Heart*, 54.

Cadorette, From the Heart, 54.

they possess subjective aspects because they involve self-consciousness. As Cadorette notes, the subjective or self-conscious aspects of ideology and the notion of utopia prompt Gutiérrez to endorse Paulo Freire's method of conscientization, which was discussed in the previous chapter. Gutiérrez believes that a change of consciousness and conscience is a necessary first step in the liberation of the poor. Conscientization makes the poor investigate and attempt to understand the forces which affect and help shape who they are and what they do. It gets them to analyze critically "how their social identity has been molded" by economic, social, and political factors Conscientization thus leads the poor to unmask the ideological apparatus working upon them and helps engender the development of a hope-filled vision of a more just and hence more humane society. This is consistent with their identity precisely as oppressed people.

This distinction between utopia and ideology sheds light on Gutiérrez's use of the notion of utopia. The poverty that the poor experience is not only the lack of material goods, but is also a lack of self-autonomy caused by the partial penetration of ideology into their consciousness. Conscientization is necessary to unmask the dehumanizing consciousness engendered by ideology. It is fueled by a Christian faith that holds that it is not God's will that anyone be poor. Conscientization awakens the deep human aspiration for a new society, for a utopia, and this ideal includes a hope-filled vision of autonomy and self-determination that counters ideological oppression.

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¹⁴⁰ Cadorette, *From the Heart*, 54.

Cadorette, From the Heart, 55.

2.2.2 Key Sources for Gutiérrez's Notion of Utopia

Given this preliminary discussion distinguishing the notion of utopia from its counterpart, ideology, an examination is needed of Cadorette's assessment of the thinkers who played influential roles in Gutiérrez's development of the notion of utopia. The goal is to clarify Gutiérrez's notion of utopia and its role in his theology of liberation.

2.2.2.1 José María Arguedas (1911-1969)¹⁴²

That José María Arguedas was a person that Gutiérrez considers important can be gleaned from the fact that he was one of the persons to whom Gutiérrez dedicated *A Theology of Liberation*. Arguedas was a novelist, born in 1911, with whom Gutierrez shared a brief, but memorable friendship. Arguedas's novels talked about the conflict between the rich and poor, the *mestizos* and the *campesinos* and Gutiérrez frequently makes references to Arguedas' writings. ¹⁴³

Cadorette points out that "no one has influenced his (Gutierrez's) thinking more than two fellow Peruvians: José María Arguedas and José Carlos Mariátegui." ¹⁴⁴ Cadorette notes that Arguedas constantly wrote about the conflict between the rich and the poor. In other words, he was intent on uncovering ideological and utopic forces at work in Peru. Arguedas rejected Christianity because he felt that the "church was one of

Some key writings of Arguedas are: *Agua. Los Escoleros. Warma Kuka (Water. The Students. Puppy Love)* published in 1935, *Todos los Sangres (All Bloods)* from 1964, *El Suenodel Pongo (The Pongo's Dream)* from 1965, and *Amor Mundo y Todos los Cuentus (Love World and All Short Stories)* from 1967. Gaspar Martinez also discusses the importance of Arguedas to Gutiérrez's thought. See Martinez, *Confronting the Mystery*, 144-147. See also William Duncan, *The Political Philosophy of Peruvian Theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez* (NY, Ontario and UK: Edwin Mellen Press, 2001), 78-80.

For example, see Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, [111, 195, 239-240] and [154, 269, 335].

¹⁴⁴ Cadorette, *From the Heart*, 67.

the principal causes of oppression since it sided with landowners by preaching otherworldly compensation to people who suffered in the here and now."¹⁴⁵ To put this idea another way, Arguedas judged that the church contributed to the ideology that was oppressing the poor. This evaluation has echoes in Gutiérrez's own theology, which challenges an understanding of the faith that overemphasizes the spiritual over the material, the afterlife over our lives in history.

While Arguedas was well aware of the misery surrounding him and the strong ideological forces at play in Peru, he nonetheless "managed to perceive the outline of a utopian vision." Cadorette points out that Arguedas portrays not only the poor's acquiescence to the oppressive forces in their lives, but more importantly their resistance to these forces, a resistance that flows from the people's sense of cultural uniqueness. Arguedas writes of the *campesinos* and how their distinctive culture continues to survive and to provide an alternate vision of society, and hence provide hope. 147

Gutiérrez himself describes the importance of Arguedas (as quoted by Cadorette):

The work of José María Arguedas continues calling us to task. This questioning cannot be responded to by bracketing what he said, that would be artificial and evasive, but only in the midst of this country's tiring struggle for life – which is Peru itself. In truth, José María's voice is heard, ever so paradoxically, in the midst of our national wrangling. The tone of his voice cannot be heard appropriately unless it is accompanied by the unequal chorus of voices – in Quechua and Spanish, of joy and pain, of liberation and oppression, of life and death, which is part of this country. The stridency of those voices in the last ten years is perhaps the real reason why that clamor is more and more part of our national consciousness. In Arguedas there is *a coherent, painfully urgent and, for*

¹⁴⁵ Cadorette, *From the Heart*, 69.

Cadorette, *From the Heart*, 73.

¹⁴⁷ Cadorette, *From the Heart*, 73.

that reason, hope-giving vision of Peru without which his writing is incomprehensible (emphasis added). 148

According to Cadorette this quotation manifests Gutiérrez's recognition that "the dialectical struggle between rich and poor, *mestizo* and *campesino*, (is) an inherent quality of Peru itself." It is the poor, not the elite intellectuals, who define what it means to be Peruvian. This theme, which Cadorette argues is basic to Gutiérrez's theology, comes from Arguedas' influence.

2.2.2.2 José Carlos Mariátegui (1895-1930)¹⁵¹

José Carlos Mariátegui, born in 1894, was a Marxist whose writings were instrumental in the eventual formation of the Peruvian Communist Party and was a very influential thinker in Latin America during his time. Though he died more than half a century before *A Theology of Liberation* was written, "he continues to influence the political imaginations of his compatriots. His ideas are part of everyday political language in Peru." Cadorette notes how Mariátegui continues to be a source of national pride for Peruvians. One of the main reasons for this widespread respect is that he was the first person to examine Peru's history from the perspective of the oppressed. 153

Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Entre las calandrias* (Lima: Centro de Estudios y Publicaciones, 1982), 242-243; quoted in Cadorette, *From the Heart*, 71.

Cadorette, From the Heart, 71.

¹⁵⁰ Cadorette, *From the Heart*, 71.

The key text of Mariategui is *Seven Interpretive Essays on Peruvian Reality* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971), trans. Marjory Urquidi.

¹⁵² Cadorette, *From the Heart*, 75.

¹⁵³ Cadorette, *From the Heart*, 75-76.

Mariátegui, prior to his turn to Marxism, was a fervent Catholic. As he read the gospels, "he became conscious of the need for what he called 'faith,' a belief in people's potential to create a new, more just social order." As Cadorette points out, Mariátegui, in his youth, believed that Catholicism could be a powerful, future-oriented force for social change, if purified of its "excessively individualistic pietism." ¹⁵⁵

Mariátegui left the institutional church in his twenties, however. He did so, as Cadorette explains, because he reached the conclusion that ecclesiastical officials had betrayed the gospel for the sake of their ties to the Peruvian oligarchy and their preoccupation with power. Mariátegui always maintained, however, a healthy respect for popular religiosity; he always affirmed the positive elements in the faith of the poor. According to Cadorette, Mariátegui felt "no contradiction between a critically appropriated faith and a commitment to radical political change." He believed that the people's deep religious stirrings brought about what was most revolutionary in Peruvian culture.

Mariátegui was thus no small contributor to Gutiérrez's thinking. As Gutiérrez himself avers (quoted by Cadorette):

Like others, I am interested in what Christianity means for the life, struggles and culture of the Peruvian people or, to say it in Mariátegui's terms, in the role of the religious factor in the historical process of the people. I am not interested in it as an expression of "Catholic thought" or as a social concern like certain intellectuals are who live in ivory towers. I refer to something much more profound, to something which can only come from the oppressed working class: to how Christianity enters into the process of popular liberation, in the construction of a nation. There is a lot here to explore, a new field of creativity

155 Cadorette, *From the Heart*, 77.

156 Cadorette, *From the Heart*, 77.

157 Cadorette, *From the Heart*, 77.

¹⁵⁴ Cadorette, *From the Heart*, 77.

which resides in the people who are both exploited and in possession of a deep *Christian faith which fights for liberation* (emphasis added). ¹⁵⁸

Cadorette concludes by noting that for both Mariátegui and Gutiérrez, the tension between faith and politics disappears. The "dividing line" is not between Christians and Marxists, but rather between those who support the ideology of the status quo and those who hold a vision of a more just, humane society. The people with this vision, this notion of utopia, were ready to struggle for a new social order.¹⁵⁹

2.2.2.3 Karl Marx (1818-1883)

Cadorette argues that Gutiérrez incorporated a number of Karl Marx's ideas within his theology, without becoming Marxist himself. One is the notion of individualism. Marx considered this to be one of the principal pillars of capitalism. The view of the individual as an autonomous center of decision-making necessarily includes the requisite economic means. In Cadorette's description, "the role model for the successful, fulfilled human being was the economically independent, discrete individual who functioned in the market place of free exchange." Gutiérrez took up this idea and elucidated its theological corollaries: individualism effectively negates the biblical mandate of solidarity, and more importantly, it tends to judge a person's value by his or

Gutiérrez, "*Entrevista con* Gustavo Gutiérrez," interview by Luis Peirano, *Quehacer* (March 1980), 115; quoted in Cadorette, *From the Heart*, 78-79.

Cadorette, *From the Heart*, 78.

¹⁶⁰ Cadorette, From the Heart, 84.

Cadorette, *From the Heart*, 85. The use of Marx and of Marxist analysis by Gutiérrez will be discussed also in chapter four below when we engage the Vatican critique of this use of Marxism. Also, Virgilio Ojoy wishes to "posit the compatibility of Marxist views with religion as manifested in Gustavo Gutiérrez's theology of liberation." With the above as his main thesis, Ojoy does not totally agree with Cadorette's presentation of Gutiérrez's relationship to Marx. See Virgilio Ojoy, *Marxism & Religion: A Fusion of Horizons* (Manila, Philippines: UST Publishing House, 2001), 118.

her economic worth. Someone who does not add to the economy is implicitly seen as a "non-person." ¹⁶²

Another idea from Marx that Gutiérrez adopted is that of class struggle. As Gutiérrez writes in *A Theology of Liberation*:

In a famous text Marx points out very precisely his contribution to the class struggle: not the discovery of its existence, but rather the analysis of its causes and an indication of the path to a classless society.... The class struggle is inherent in classist organization of society. The objective which Marx proposes is to abolish that which gives origin to the very existence of social classes. But the causes of the class struggle cannot be overcome without first becoming aware of the struggle and its demands in the process of building a new society. ¹⁶³

As Cadorette notes, Gutiérrez drew an important lesson from Marx's idea of class struggle. He saw that the detrimental effects of capitalism will not be overcome until the poor understand the true causes of their oppression. The poor must see themselves as active agents in history; they must realize that they have the right to shape society according to their own best interests.¹⁶⁴

From Marx, Gutiérrez also enriched his notion of history. He came to see the course of events as open to change initiated by men and women. History and society are not merely mental constructs, nor are they entirely and solely objective to us to the extent that they are beyond our control. Rather, history and society are the concrete fruits of human action as well as being objective phenomena. Human beings can and do shape history. Cadorette explains that some of Marx's ideas thus enabled Gutiérrez to make

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See Gutierrez, *The Power of the Poor in History* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1983) pp. 92-93.

Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, [249, 284, 342 footnote no. 51]. This quote is from the first English edition (1973).

¹⁶⁴ Cadorette, *From the Heart*, 87.

¹⁶⁵ Cadorette, *From the Heart*, 88.

a more realistic assessment of society and history – a more "scientific" awareness that better corresponds to how changes come about in human affairs. ¹⁶⁶

2.2.2.4 Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937)¹⁶⁷

Antonio Gramsci, born in 1891, is a well-known Marxist theorist. As Cadorette notes, his reputation is the result of years of hard work in contextualizing and implementing Marx's ideas in his native Italy. ¹⁶⁸ Cadorette also notes the contributions of Gramsci to Gutiérrez's thought.

Gramsci argued that a successful socialist revolution would occur only if Marxist principles were in tune with national conditions. In this regard, he and Mariátegui were closely related. Gramsci's contextualized Marxism helps illumine Gutiérrez's understanding of the possibility of creating a new, just social order. Gutiérrez says that:

political consciousness is sharpened when the contradiction grows between an increasing aspiration to secure effective freedom and justice, and the existence of a social order which claims to recognize freedom and justice in law, but in reality denies them in countless ways to social classes, entire peoples and racial minorities. Hence the revolutionary, militant search for the right conditions for the construction of a free, just society, and the attitude of critical suspicion towards any ideological argument designed to conceal a situation of cruelty and discord.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ Cadorette, From the Heart, 88.

Two important texts of Gramsci are *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* Ed. And trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971) and *Il materialismo storico e la filosofia di Benedetto Croce* (Turin: Einaudi, 1972).

¹⁶⁸ Cadorette, *From the Heart*, 94.

Gustavo Gutiérrez, "Liberation Movements and Theology," in *Concilium* 93, *Jesus Christ and Human Freedom*, ed. Edward Schillebeeckx and Bas van Iersel (NY: Herder and Herder, 1974), 135.

Cadorette argues that the Gramscian concept of contradiction described in this quotation is what is used by Gutiérrez to explain the growing critical consciousness of the poor in the developing nations.¹⁷⁰

Another important concept that Gutiérrez appropriated from Gramsci is the notion of the "organic intellectual, the thinker connected with everyday life." The theologian is not one who sits in an ivory tower, divorced from real people in real situations. Rather, the theologian is one with the people, lives and thinks with them, and writes their theology. True conscientization, as already shown, plays an important role in liberation and utopic hope and can only be done by an organic theologian (intellectual), and not by an outsider.

Gramsci also spoke about the "partial penetration" of ideology into the culture and religion of the oppressed. ¹⁷² This plays a crucial role in Gutiérrez's understanding of ideology vis-à-vis utopia in the lives of the Peruvian people, as was shown earlier.

2.2.2.5 Ernst Bloch (1885-1977)¹⁷³

Gutierrez received some seminal ideas from Arguedas, Mariategu, Marx, and Gramsci. According to Cadorette, in light of his reflection on the ideas of these thinkers, Gutierrez came to the conclusion that:

Despite day-to-day oppression the poor maintain an abiding hope in the future and their hope is something more than a dream. It is a *gestalt*, a powerful set of images, words, and gestures that sustains them in the present and directs them

See Cadorette, *From the Heart*, 96-97.

¹⁷⁰ Cadorette, *From the Heart*, 95.

¹⁷² Cadorette, *From the Heart*, 97.

The principal work by Bloch referenced is *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* 2nd ed. (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1969).

toward the future. The term Gutiérrez employs to encapsulate the multidimensionality of this hope is "utopia." 174

Therefore, Gutierrez understands utopia as the vision of a new society, bringing hope and direction to the poor in their struggles.

Among the theorists to whom Gutiérrez turned in order to flesh out his understanding of hope, the most important is Ernst Bloch. As Cadorette notes, Bloch analyzed the course of Western history and saw that a vision of the future ran all through it, holding it together and propelling it forward. The term that Bloch used to describe this phenomenon was "utopia" which he linked with hope. Cadorette notes that Gutiérrez's synopsis of Bloch's thesis and Gutiérrez's own view of utopia are remarkably similar. Gutiérrez writes in *A Theology of Liberation*:

For Bloch man is he who hopes for and dreams of the future; but it is an active hope which subverts the existing order. He accepts Marx's assertion that "philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it." He uses as his point of departure what Marx himself, in his first thesis on Feuerbach, asserted had been left out of all materialistic theories: "The chief defect of all hitherto existing materialism – that of Feuerbach included – is that the thing [*Gegenstand*], reality, sensuousness, is conceived only in the form of the object [*Objekt*] or of *contemplation* [*Anschauung*], but not as *human sensuous activity, practice*, not subjectively." Bloch attempts to clarify in his work the meaning of these aspects of revolutionary activity, that is to say, of the practico-critical activity. 176

For Gutierrez, utopia brings to the poor a hope that is not passive. One is not supposed to just sit idly and expect God to solve one's problems. Rather, one's faith demands envisioning – and actively striving to bring about -- a new society inspired by the values of the gospel.

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¹⁷⁴ Cadorette. *From the Heart*, 98.

¹⁷⁵ Cadorette, *From the Heart*, 98-99.

Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, [123, 216, 265-266].

According to Cadorette, Gutierrez built on Bloch's thought when he referred to the "materiality" of social thought, that is, "sensuous activity, practice." Hope is objective, true, but also subjective in that it is part of people's lives. 177 By working with Bloch's thought, Gutierrez overcame the traditional dichotomy between the personal and social characteristics of hope. This move enabled Gutiérrez, according to Cadorette, to "escape from the vulgar materialism of certain Marxists who cannot bear to discuss questions of subjectivity and individuality and avoid the idealism of certain Christian theologians who refuse to take society seriously." Following Bloch, Gutiérrez argued that hope drives society forward. It challenges the oppression of the present and calls for a just, liberated future. It denounces the present unfair system, and announces a future new and better society. These thoughts about hope are essential elements to Gutiérrez's notion of utopia. In Cadorette's words, "Gutiérrez's debt to Bloch is profound." 179

This section has shown that, according to Gutierrez, the poor have their consciousness partially shaped by ideology, but they retain an active hope that challenges this ideology and hence questions the unjust order. The contradiction between this hope and the reigning injustice leads to a critical consciousness among the poor that in turn brings about an examination of the causes of their poverty. Gutiérrez understands Peruvian identity as that of the poor and their desire to become artisans of their own destiny, in other words, a desire for utopia.

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¹⁷⁷ Cadorette, *From the Heart*, 99.

¹⁷⁸ Cadorette, *From the Heart*, 100.

¹⁷⁹ Cadorette, *From the Heart*, 102.

2.3 A Brief Typology of Utopias

Erin McKenna presents a typology of notions of utopia in *The Task of Utopia*¹⁸⁰ and her work is examined in order that Gutiérrez's own use of the term can be situated in relation to common contemporary types of utopia. McKenna cites three models of utopias: "end-state," "anarchist," and "process."

McKenna describes her first model, End-state utopia, as a:

...rationalistic worldview (that) tends to identify the absolute good with a perfect, complete, unchanging entity or state of being that can be discerned by examining the world, and our place in it from a god's-eye view... It has as its foundations a worldview that sees the world, and our experience in it, as a given over which we have no control. ¹⁸¹

In McKenna's End-state model, utopia is objective, singular, and absolute for all. This is unlike Gutiérrez's idea of utopia because he does not identify one fixed end goal that can be attained within history, let alone absolutized regardless of subjective viewpoint or experience. According to Gutierrez, a vision of utopia arises out of a people's own finite and limited understanding. It is always a proximate goal which is never fixed or static. The idea of utopia is an anticipation of a reality that will only be achieved at the eschaton. Furthermore, in Gutiérrez's view, human behavior is not ultimately fated or destined, and, for this reason, a key component of Gutiérrez's ideal of utopia is the concept of freedom. The very freedom Gutiérrez emphasizes so strongly necessitates that the resulting vision itself is never fixed.

McKenna's second kind of utopia is what she calls anarchist. This utopia rejects the static and authoritarian nature of the end-state; rather, it emphasizes the freedom of

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Erin McKenna, *The Task of Utopia* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001).

McKenna, *The Task of Utopia*, 17-18.

the individual. In fact, "anarchists believe people, as individuals, are in the best position to govern themselves. With anarchy the individual is the heart of society and the only possible source of authority." Again, this is not what Gutiérrez means by utopia. First of all, in his discussion of the three dimensions of liberation, Gutiérrez emphasizes that we all must ultimately be freed from sin. As such, we cannot govern ourselves properly, independently of God's grace. Second of all, Gutiérrez is clear that we are called to salvation as a people, and never merely as individuals. Finally, Gutiérrez places final and absolute authority ultimately only upon God, and never upon ourselves.

The last kind of utopia McKenna describes is what she calls process. She states that this model:

...requires that we recognize that the unfolding of the future is not determined separate from us, but as intricately connected with us. It requires that we recognize how our participation affects what the future can be. It requires that we recognize that there is no end-state at which we must work to arrive, but a multiple of possible future states which we seek and try out. 184

This model, finally, sheds the most light on what Gutiérrez means when he uses the notion of utopia. For him, the building of the new society demands our active participation. Furthermore, the vision of this more just and humane world is never fixed or static. On the contrary, this aspiration is a people's best approximation, given finitude, of what the Kingdom would be like in a given historical situation. People constantly need to revise their view of a better world as their understanding shifts and as circumstances change. Put theologically, they can never fully circumscribe the Kingdom of God within their human forms and categories. They can try to approach it through

McKenna, *The Task of Utopia*, 49-50.

See Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, [25, 36-37, 59-60] and [137, 235, 301-302].

McKenna, *The Task of Utopia*, 83.

their ideals and subsequent attempts at instantiating these ideals, and they must always continually do so, but no one can ever fully grasp the Kingdom; for ultimately, it grasps us.

Having thus briefly discussed a typology of utopias, and having identified the process model as that which helps best understand what Gutiérrez's understanding is, how Gutiérrez treats of the notion of utopia in *A Theology of Liberation* is the next consideration.

2.4 The Notion of Utopia as Gutiérrez Treats it in A Theology of Liberation 185

The previous sections studied Cadorette's analysis of the distinction in Gutiérrez's thought between utopia and ideology, Cadorette's presentation of the sources that influenced Gutiérrez's thinking on utopia, and McKenna's treatment of different contemporary understandings of utopia. This section examines the presentation of the notion of utopia as found in *A Theology of Liberation*.

At the outset of his discussion, Gutierrez explains that he uses the term utopia to "refer to a historical project for a qualitatively different society and to express the aspiration to establish new social relations among human beings." In other words, the idea of utopia concerns an active, practical vision of a just, more humane society. He quickly points out, however, that the revival of utopian thought should not blind us to the

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Similar treatments of this section of *A Theology of Liberation* can be found in Nickoloff, "Church of the Poor," 513-517 and Martinez, *Confronting the Mystery*, 127-132. The key difference in my treatment from theirs is that I aim to show the centrality of utopia to the whole of Gutiérrez's thought and these authors do not.

Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, [135, 232, 295]. The translation is mine. The English editions use the word "plan" to translate the Spanish "proyecto." As I clarified in the introduction to this chapter, utopia refers to the vision, and not the actual plan of implementation in its concrete specificities. Gutiérrez himself confirmed this in Gustavo Gutiérrez, interview by author, digital recording, Notre Dame, Indiana, 13 December 2004. To avoid confusion, I translate "proyecto" as "project."

reality that it is "the revolutionary experience of our times" that makes this way of thinking viable. 187 Gutiérrez argues that the notion of a utopia would never have left the realm of academic discussion without the sacrifices of countless people who reject the unjust social order and struggle to create a new society.

Gutiérrez then briefly but clearly points out what the term utopia is not, before explaining more about what he takes it to be. In the common understanding, talk of utopia came to be "synonymous with illusion, lack of realism, irrationality." Such is not what Gutiérrez means when he uses the term. Rather, he traces the original meaning of the term as intended by Thomas More in the work of the same name, *Utopia* (1516). Gutiérrez points out that when More wrote the book, he was writing about the England of his time. In Gutierrez's words: "The fiction of a utopia in which the common good prevails, where there is no private property, no money or privileges, was the opposite of his own country, in whose politics he was involved. More's utopia is a city of the future, something to be achieved, not a return to a lost paradise." ¹⁸⁹

Gutiérrez then notes that, due to the growing emergence of a deep aspiration for liberation in our times, it is More's original meaning which is once again gaining the currency mentioned above. He characterizes this utopian thought as "taking on, in line with the initial intention, its quality of being subversive to and a driving force of history."190

¹⁸⁷ Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [135, 232, 296].

¹⁸⁸ Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [135, 232, 296].

¹⁸⁹ Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [135, 233, 297].

¹⁹⁰ Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [135, 232, 296-297].

Having thus introduced the notion of utopia, Gutiérrez proceeds to enumerate three elements which are to characterize what he means by the term. These are: 1) the notion of utopia's relationship to historical reality, 2) its verification in praxis, and 3) its rational nature.

2.4.1 The Idea of Utopia's relationship to historical reality

According to Gutiérrez, the idea of utopia does not refer to something illusory and unreal, as the common understanding holds. On the contrary, it is precisely characterized by its relationship to present historical reality. As More intended, it is a critique of the injustice of the present, in light of a radical betterment of society in the future. The notion of utopia's relationship to the present historical reality is a dynamic one, having two aspects which are both necessary. Using terms he borrows from Paulo Freire, he calls these two aspects "denunciation" and "annunciation."

First, the notion of utopia necessarily denounces the present order. It is precisely the shortcomings of the present order and the resulting discontent of people with it that give rise to utopian thought. This aspect, denunciation, means that what utopia seeks is not mere reform, but rather revolution. As Gutiérrez puts it: "The repudiation of a dehumanizing situation is an unavoidable aspect of utopia. It is a matter of a complete rejection that attempts to strike at the roots of the evil... As Eric Weil says, 'Revolutions erupt when man is discontent with his discontent.'" This retrospective aspect of the idea of utopia, denunciation, gives us a clue as to why the notion of utopia is so attractive and important for Gutiérrez. The existential situation of Latin America is marked by

Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [136, 233, 297].

massive suffering caused by oppression and exploitation. Such a state of affairs screams for a denunciation of the regnant social order.

However, the idea of utopia has a prospective aspect as well – annunciation. It announces that which is not yet, but must be. It foretells the coming of a new order of things, a new society. "It is the field of creative imagination which proposes the alternative values to those rejected." In this sense, the denunciation is defined vis-à-vis the annunciation. The current state of affairs cannot be, must not be, precisely because it diametrically opposes what the majority of people hope for – what they know and believe will be, must be. In the same vein, the annunciation presupposes and builds upon the denunciation. What is to be hoped for in the future, that for which people must strive, is in direct contrast to that which is rejected. What people long for and seek to build is precisely a society which is not oppressive, which is not unjust, one in which people are not suffering due to the evils perpetrated by a ruling class. The idea of a just, more humane society declares that people cannot retain or move back to the old, unjust ways. The notion of utopia urges men and women forward; "it is a pro-jection into the future, a dynamic and mobilizing factor in history."

2.4.2 The Idea of Utopia as necessarily verified in praxis

Still following Freire, Gutiérrez states that concomitant with the notion of utopia's denunciation and annunciation is the task of taking concrete steps toward a new social, economic, and political reality. Between the present time and the full coming of God's kingdom, people must improve the reigning unjust situation in specific ways. It is not

Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [136, 233, 298].

Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [136, 233, 298].

enough to denounce the current situation as bad and unacceptable. It is also not enough to announce that things will eventually get better. Humankind must work to make things better. Talk of change, both denunciation and annunciation, is empty unless it shines forth through what people do, through their praxis. Gutierrez writes: "Denunciation and annunciation can be achieved only *in* praxis. This is what we mean when we talk about a utopia which is the driving force of history and subversive of the existing order. If utopia does not lead to action in the present, it is an evasion of reality." 194

For Gutiérrez, it is precisely praxis that gives validity to a people's denunciation of the status quo and its annunciation of a new social order. The rejection of current injustice will only be meaningful and authentic insofar as it is done in the very act of striving for justice, even if this idealism entails risk. A commitment to the creation of a new, just society is a commitment to utopia. Without this commitment, a denunciation of society's ills will be empty rhetoric, and an annunciation will be merely a pie-in-the-sky, with no real content or credibility. It is utopia that guides a people's praxis. At the same time, it is praxis that judges whether utopian thought is genuine. Gutiérrez writes that "authentic utopian thought postulates, enriches, and supplies new goals for political action, while at the same time it is verified by this action. Its fruitfulness depends upon this relationship."

2.4.3 Utopia as having a rational nature

Gutiérrez points out that utopias emerge with great vigor when science "has reached its limits in its explanations of social reality, and when new paths open up for

Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [136, 234, 298].

Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [136, 234, 299].

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historical praxis." To use an analogy, once our heads begin to hurt from banging them against a brick wall, it is then that we think of new possibilities such as climbing the wall, or going around it. Perhaps an example might further clarify this point. For a long time, humanity was content with its understanding that the world was flat, or that the sun revolved around the earth. There was no reason to think otherwise, and so no one did. However, once empirical evidence and observation began to prove otherwise, the old explanations ceased to make sense. Thus, some people like Galileo and Copernicus were no longer content with the explanations. To employ terms used earlier, they denounced the old, inadequate theories, and announced the new, more adequate ones. Through their creativity and imagination, scientific understanding changed and grew. This is rational. To continue to believe that the sun revolves around the earth in the face of overwhelming evidence is irrational. Similarly, utopia is not irrational because it seeks to imagine and to establish a more adequate state of affairs in scoiety.

For Gutiérrez, the notion of utopia is the imagining of a new order and a necessary prelude to science. Referring to science, Gutierrez states that utopia "constitutes the essence of its creativity and dynamism." More specifically, Gutiérrez is referring here to the use of science in the social and political spheres as can be seen in the following quotation where he cites Paul Blanquart:

The theoretical construct which allows us to know social reality and which makes political action efficacious demands the mediation of the creative imagination: "The transition from the empirical to the theoretical presupposes a jump, a break: the intervention of the imagination." And Blanquart points out that imagination in politics is called utopia. ¹⁹⁸

Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [137, 234, 299].

Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [137, 234, 299].

Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [137, 234, 299].

At this point, Gutiérrez differentiates between ideology and the notion of utopia along the lines discussed by Cadorette above. 199 Ideology is not discontent with the current state of affairs. Rather, it gives a rationale that justifies the status quo, and hence it seeks to preserve the social order. It therefore tends to cling even to irrational explanations in its desire for preservation. Gutiérrez argues that ideology "...does not offer adequate and scientific knowledge of reality; rather, it masks it...Therefore, also, ideology tends to dogmatize all that has not succeeded in separating itself from it or has fallen under its influence. Political action, science, and faith do not escape this danger." 200

To go back to our earlier example, ideology would cling to the belief that it is the sun which revolves around the earth, even in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary. In practical terms, ideology is that which is used by the oppressive minority to justify the present order, even if the current state of affairs leads to suffering by the majority.

2.4.4 Utopia as Mediating Between Faith and Political Action

These three characteristic elements of utopia show how, for Gutiérrez, the hope and struggle for a more just and humane society mediates between faith and political action. The idea of a just and humane social order is profoundly related to historical reality. Utopian thinking entails discontent with an unjust and oppressive state of affairs and impels a people who rebel to act and think as they do. They denounce the current

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See also earlier in this chapter.

Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [137, 235, 300].

conditions as wrong and not befitting humans, and they simultaneously announce the hope for a new humanity in a new society, one characterized by freedom and solidarity. This discontent and this hope impel them to act, to make a profound and unshakeable commitment to the subversion of what they denounce and to strive to build what they announce. This historical praxis, however, cannot be undertaken irrationally. The people must not be blinded by ideology. They cannot remain content with inadequate explanations of why things are the way they are. If they are truly to change the unjust social order, they must scientifically study the root causes of the injustice, and they must creatively imagine what can and must be done. Hence, Gutiérrez argues that it is precisely the notion of utopia that "leads us to an authentic and scientific knowledge of reality and to a praxis which transforms what exists."

With his understanding of utopia as having these three essential characteristics, Gutiérrez concludes that:

Utopia is a factor of historical dynamism and radical transformation. Utopia, indeed, is on the level of the cultural revolution which attempts to forge a new kind of humanity. Freire is right when he says that in today's world only the oppressed person, only the oppressed class, only oppressed peoples, can denounce and announce. Only they are capable of working out revolutionary utopias and not conservative or reformist ideologies. The oppressive system's only future is to maintain its present of affluence.²⁰²

Gutiérrez, in Chapter 3 of *A Theology of Liberation*, entitled "The Problem," discusses the very problem to which he is responding:

To speak about a theology of liberation is to seek an answer to the following question: what relation is there between salvation and the historical process of human liberation? In other words, we must attempt to *discern the interrelationship among the different meanings of the term liberation* which we indicated above...We are dealing here with the classic question of the relation

Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [137, 235, 301].

Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [137, 235, 300].

between faith and human existence, between faith and social reality, *between faith* and political action, or in other words, between the Kingdom of God and the building up of the world (emphasis added).²⁰³

In this quotation, Gutierrez describes his theological project as an attempt to explore the interrelationship of liberation's three dimensions – thus explaining the proper relationship between faith and political action. The notion of utopia lies at the center of his discussion of the three dimensions and is the key to properly relating faith and political action. Therefore, even without mentioning the word, Gutierrez underscores the importance of the notion of utopia to his theological project.

The problem to which Gutiérrez is responding is the articulation of the proper relationship between faith and political action. He begins his answer by revisiting the three dimensions of the term liberation:

When we discussed the notion of liberation, we said that we were dealing with a single process; but it is a complex, differentiated unity, which has within itself various levels of meaning which are not to be confused: economic, social, and political liberation; liberation which leads to the creation of a new humanity in a new society of solidarity; and liberation from sin and entrance into communion with God and with all persons. The first corresponds to the level of scientific rationality which supports real and effective transforming political action; the second stands at the level of utopia, of historical projections, with the characteristics we have just considered; the third is on the level of faith. ²⁰⁴

In this quotation lies Gutiérrez's response to the problem of the relationship between faith and political action. It is the notion of utopia (which corresponds to the second meaning of liberation) that mediates between faith (which corresponds to the third meaning) and political action (which corresponds to the first meaning). It becomes even more evident how important and central the notion of utopia is to Gutiérrez's theology. The idea of

²⁰⁴ Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, [137, 235, 301-302].

Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [29, 45, 64].

utopia, of a process toward the full realization of human wellbeing, lies at the very heart of his response to the problem for which he is writing the book!

Gutiérrez argues that faith and political action cannot have a direct, immediate relationship. If one were to understand the relationship as immediate, then one would "seek from faith norms and criteria for particular political options." This position would be tantamount to seeking from divine revelation what one is supposed to do politically in a concrete situation. For example, one would have to turn to the pages of scripture to determine whether or not one can engage in stem-cell research, or what the minimum wage should be. Such a position demands that there would be only one correct political option – the one "divinely revealed." Gutiérrez argues that holding a direct relationship between faith and political action can result in a dangerous situation where the proper autonomy of both the political arena and the religious sphere are endangered.²⁰⁶

A concrete instance of when faith and political options were related directly is the Philippine presidential election of 1992. The then Archbishop of Manila, Jaime Cardinal Sin, actively campaigned against one candidate, Fidel Ramos, because he was a Protestant. The Filipino faithful were told that as Catholics, they should vote for a Catholic. This ignored any other qualifications that the candidates had. Positions on social and political issues were not discussed. The fact that Ramos ultimately won the election resulted in a loss of credibility for the Catholic Church in the Philippines.

On the other hand, Gutiérrez argues that the opposite view – the assertion that faith and political action have no relation – is just as untenable. Such a position would

Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [138, 236, 302].

Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [138, 236, 302].

imply that faith and politics move on entirely separated and unrelated planes. Gutiérrez says: "If one accepts this assertion, either he will have to engage in verbal gymnastics to show – without succeeding – how faith should express itself in a commitment to a more just society; or the result is that faith comes to coexist, in a most opportunistic manner, with any political option."²⁰⁷ Indeed, Gutiérrez is very clear about how he believes the relationship between faith and political action should be conceived: "Faith and political action will not enter into a correct and fruitful relationship except through the effort to create a new type of person in a different society, that is, except through utopia, to use the term we have attempted to clarify in the preceding paragraphs.",²⁰⁸ In other words, it is only through the envisioning and subsequent attempts at trying to create a just social order that faith can be brought to meaningfully bear upon our political action.

Ironically, the Philippines also serves as an example of a situation where faith has at times had little or no bearing on political realities. A document from the Philippine church illustrates the problem. "For most of our people today the faith is centered on the practice of the rites of popular piety.... Not on community. Not on building up our world unto the image of the Kingdom."²⁰⁹ The Philippine church recognizes that the Christian faith for Filipinos should entail more than just piety. A necessary component of Christian discipleship is addressing political, social, and economic problems that beset the community. In other words, Filipinos must envision and strive to create a world in accordance with the Kingdom of God.

²⁰⁷ Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [138, 236, 303].

²⁰⁸ Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [138, 236, 303].

²⁰⁹ PCP II, no. 13.

How does the notion of utopia, as understood by Gutiérrez, provide for a proper relationship between faith and political action? Viewing the question positively, the notion of utopia provides the vision, the basis for the struggle to better the social order. It provides the proximate goal as well as the impetus for political action. Political liberation then becomes viewed precisely as the path "toward the utopia of a freer, more human humankind, the protagonist of its own history." Given his understanding of utopia, Gutiérrez argues that the idea of a just and humane society radicalizes the commitment to create a truly free society, one without social inequalities. In other words, the notion of utopia generates the "permanent creation of a new humanity" in a radically different society marked by genuine solidarity. This creation then is where political liberation intersects with the communion of all persons with each other, and with God. This communion with God implies the third meaning of liberation – liberation from sin – for it is precisely sin which is ultimately at the root of all oppression, injustice, and lack of communion among people. 211 This communion we seek through the creation of a new humanity via the road of political liberation is not only possible, but assured, by God. While men and women do not create the Kingdom of God fully in history, they can certainly build it up and help it grow. They are assured by their trust in God that their historical praxis has value. Gutierrez writes: "Faith reveals to us the deep meaning of the history which we fashion with our own hands; it teaches us that every human act which is oriented towards the construction of a more just society has value in terms of communion

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Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [138, 236, 303].

Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [139, 237, 305].

with God – in terms of salvation; inversely it teaches that all injustice is a breach with God."212

Gutiérrez argues that an understanding of the relationship between faith and political action as mediated through the notion of utopia guarantees that we do not fall into the same pitfalls and dangers of the view that proposes a direct, immediate relationship. In his words, using the notion of utopia as a necessary bridge:

...assures that liberation from sin and communion with God in solidarity with all persons – manifested in political liberation and enriched by its contributions – does not fall into idealism and evasion. But at the same time, this mediation prevents these manifestations from becoming translated into any kind of Christian ideology of political action or a politico-religious messianism. Christian hope opens us, in an attitude of spiritual childhood, to the gift of the future promised by God. It keeps us from any confusion of the Kingdom with any one historical stage, from any idolatry toward unavoidably ambiguous human achievement, from any absolutizing of revolution. 213

Gutierrez is saying two things here. First, using utopia as a bridge prevents a view of faith that is escapist; a view that holds that faith has no bearing on political and economic realities such as poverty and oppression. For Gutierrez, faith is not an opiate for the masses. Faith is not about telling people to simply tolerate their suffering because they can look forward to heaven. As the Lord's Prayer puts it, the goal is for the Kingdom to come, for God's will to be done *on earth* as it is in heaven. Second, using utopia as a bridge prevents treating political choices as absolute. There is no single political option revealed directly and unambiguously by God. The full flowering of the Kingdom of God is not a human achievement. It is ultimately a gift from God.

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Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [139, 238, 306].

²¹² Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [139, 237-238, 305]. 213

To be clear here: utopia is something people bring about; the gospel does not provide it. 214 The gospel supplies the values of the Kingdom. For example, it urges compassion and respect for every human being. A people must then envision, as best they can, given their finite understanding, how the Kingdom would look in their current historical context. They must imagine a concrete realization of God's reign. Armed with this utopian vision, they undertake a scientific analysis of their situation and come up with specific plans of action which they subsequently implement. Their faith and their political action are not directly related; the idea of utopia acts as the bridge between them.

The relationship between faith and political action cannot be immediate because the faith cannot possibly provide a concrete plan of political action. The faith can tell people that they must love their neighbor, for example, but it cannot possibly provide a calculus for determining what a just minimum wage would be for a particular society in a particular historical context. It is the notion of utopia which allows for the gap to be bridged because it enables people to look at their society and imagine what this society would look like if everyone had the required sufficiency of material means. Armed with this vision, they then undertake a rational analysis of what would be required by it.

To make Gutierrez's point clearer, let us consider the case of determining a just minimum wage. Calculate the cost of living including education and health care, for example, and arrive at a figure, let us say, of \$12.50 an hour as that which will enable people to live adequately. Some people thus advocate that the government implement this figure as the new minimum wage. Others may have a different utopian vision. They may argue that \$12.50 is too high as a minimum wage because such a figure would mean that the government would not have adequate money to fund national parks and museums

Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [139, 238, 306].

which are an integral part of their utopian vision. The notion of utopia allows such a disagreement on particular political options to operate on the level either of the specific plans or on the vision, and not on the level of faith. The fact that people disagree on what the minimum wage should be does not necessarily mean that one of them is unchristian. One may be a Republican, and the other a Democrat, but they can still both be Christian precisely because their particular political positions are rooted in their respective utopian visions, and not directly on their Christian faith.

2.5 Viewing A Theology of Liberation through the Lens of Utopia²¹⁵

The clarification of Gutierrez's notion of utopia and its mediating function between politics and religious belief has positioned us to examine how this notion shapes Gutierrez's argument in *A Theology of Liberation*. Because this idea of a just and humane society is crucial to Gutierrez's reasoning, it can serve as an interpretive key to *A Theology of Liberation*. The notion of utopia can be used, in other words, to illumine aspects of Gutierrez's book that are frequently overlooked or at least undervalued. Between its introduction and its conclusion, *A Theology of Liberation* consists of thirteen chapters, clustered into four parts.

At the beginning of the brief, two and a half page introduction to the original edition – the very first two sentences, actually -- Gutiérrez tells us what he intends *A Theology of Liberation* to be:

or shared an understanding with other commentators (such as Martinez or Nickoloff). To the best of my knowledge, no one has undertaken an examination of the notion of utopia as operative throughout Gutiérrez's whole theological project. This section looks at utopia's role throughout *A Theology of Liberation*. The next chapter studies the role of utopia in Gutiérrez's subsequent books.

The previous sections of this chapter were either based on the work of others (such as Cadorette) thared an understanding with other commentators (such as Martinez or Nickoloff). To the best of my

This book is an attempt at reflection, based on the gospel and the experiences of men and women committed to the process of liberation in the oppressed and exploited land of Latin America. It is a theological reflection born of the experience of shared efforts to abolish the current unjust situation and to build a different society, freer and more human (emphasis added).²¹⁶

As shown earlier, the vision of a new society that allows for more freedom and is more authentically human is central to the notion of utopia. We see here that Gutierrez embraces this notion at the very outset of the book. Indeed Gutierrez's reflection on the idea of a more just and more humane society resulted in the theology of liberation.

Gutiérrez then points out that consideration of the theological meaning of liberation necessitates that he define the terms "theology" and "liberation." He notes that he will do this in Part I (the first two chapters) of *A Theology of Liberation* and that providing these definitions will enable him to explain why he pays special attention in the book to "the critical function of theology with respect to the presence and activity of humankind in history." What he says as regards this presence and activity in history helps strengthen the argument about utopia's centrality to his thought. Gutierrez writes: "The most important instance of this presence in our times, especially in underdeveloped and oppressed countries, is *the struggle to construct a just and fraternal society, where persons can live with dignity and be the agents of their own destiny* (emphasis added)." The italicized words in this quotation all point to the utopian vision, as Gutiérrez uses the term. The second dimension of liberation, to which utopia corresponds, refers precisely to the liberation of people as artisans of their own destiny within a radically new society characterized by justice and solidarity.

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Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [xiii, ix, 9].

Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [xiv, x, 10].

Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [xiv, x, 10].

2.5.1 "Theology and Liberation"

Part I of A Theology of Liberation consists of two chapters. In the first chapter, Gutiérrez discusses the term "theology," while in the second, he discusses "liberation." As we see in the discussion to follow, the notion of utopia plays a very central role not just in understanding what theology is for Gutiérrez, but, more importantly, what he understands liberation to be. The idea of a just and humane society lies at the very center of his understanding of liberation, as we already saw earlier.

Gutiérrez begins Chapter 1 by discussing two classical tasks of theology that he considers permanent and essential: theology as wisdom and as rational knowledge. Theology as wisdom refers to the early church practice of understanding theology as primarily a meditation on scriptures with the goal of spiritual growth. Theology, in this sense, pertains to spirituality. Theology as rational knowledge refers to the understanding of theology as "an intellectual discipline, born of the meeting of faith and reason." Gutiérrez argues that these two understandings of theology are essential: theology must be understood as referring to both spirituality and rational knowledge. Gutiérrez then goes on to discuss his definition of theology – that of it being critical reflection on praxis in the light of God's Word. He goes on to emphasize the necessity of theology being a critical reflection: "Theological reflection would then necessarily be a criticism of society and the Church insofar as they are called and addressed by the Word of God; it would be a critical theory, worked out in the light of the Word accepted in faith

Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [4, 4-5, 17-18].

²²⁰ Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [5, 5, 19].

and inspired by a practical purpose – and therefore indissolubly linked to historical praxis."²²¹ He adds a little later on:

To reflect on the basis of the historical praxis of liberation is to reflect in the light of the future which is believed in and hoped for. It is to reflect with a view to action which transforms the present....Theology as critical reflection on historical praxis is a liberating theology, a theology of the liberating transformation of the history of humankind and also therefore that part of humankind – gathered into *ecclesia* – which openly confesses Christ.²²²

These quotations above show how central the notion of utopia is to Gutiérrez's understanding of theology. Theology is a reflection on praxis with a "view to action which transforms the present." At the same time, this reflection on praxis is a reflection in the light of God's Word. Therefore, theology understood in this way must necessarily include an adequate understanding of the proper relation between our historical, political action and our interpretation of God's Word – a relation which the notion of utopia makes possible without separation or collapse of the two terms.

In Chapter 2, Gutiérrez discusses the term "liberation" and contrasts it with "development." He points out the inadequacy of development as a concept because it is basically synonymous with economic growth. For Gutiérrez, there is more to liberation than merely economic wellbeing. Furthermore, developmentalism tended to foster undue dependence on the rich on the part of the poor, which actually hinders their authentic emancipation. He thus argues for the use of the term "liberation." He argues that liberation is "much richer in human content" than development. More importantly, liberation allows for the notion that humankind must be the agent of its own destiny, the

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Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, [9, 11, 28].
Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, [12, 15, 34].

Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [17, 27, 43].

creator of its own authentic freedom. Gutiérrez views history as characterized by ever greater aspirations on the part of humanity for greater freedom.

To conceive of history as a process of human liberation is to consider freedom as a historical conquest; it is to understand that the step from an abstract to a real freedom is not taken without a struggle against all the forces that oppress humankind, a struggle full of pitfalls, detours, and temptations to run away. The goal is not only better living conditions, a radical change of structures, a social revolution; it is much more: the continuous creation, never ending, of a new way to be human, a permanent cultural revolution (emphasis added). 224

Gutiérrez then proceeds to define liberation as a single, complex process that has three inseparable, interdependent dimensions: 1) economic, social, and political liberation, corresponding to political action; 2) liberation which leads to the creation of a new humanity in a new society of solidarity, corresponding to utopia (to which the italicized words in the above passage refer); and 3) liberation from sin and entrance into communion with God and with others, corresponding to faith. 225 It is utopia which allows the fruitful relation of political action and faith, without separation or collapse of these two terms.

2.5.2 "Posing the Problem"

Part II of A Theology of Liberation consists of Chapters 3, 4, and 5 and in this part Gutiérrez discusses the problem faced by the Latin American Church – that there is a need to understand adequately the relationship between the Church and the World, or put in another way, to understand the relationship between faith and political action. As shown earlier, it is precisely the notion of utopia which is Gutiérrez's answer to this problem.

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See Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [24-25, 36-37, 59-60] and [137, 235, 301-302].

²²⁴ Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [21, 32, 53].

In chapter 3, Gutiérrez talks about "The Problem" he is trying to address (as quoted earlier):

We are dealing here with the classic question of the relation between faith and human existence, between faith and social reality, between faith and political action, or in other words, between the Kingdom of God and the building up of the world. Within the scope of this problem the classical theme of the Church-society or Church-world relationship is also considered. 226

Gutiérrez stresses the need to clarify these relationships because, citing Johannes Metz, "despite the many discussions about the Church and the world, there is nothing more unclear than the nature of their relationship to one another."²²⁷ Even though Vatican II helps clarify the relationship somewhat, Gutiérrez points out that the conciliar texts remain on too general a level. Thus, Gutiérrez argues that one of the main tasks of contemporary theology is precisely to elucidate and clarify these relationships.

He begins his reflection by pointing out that "the social praxis of contemporary humankind has begun to reach maturity. It is the behavior of a humankind ever more conscious of being an active subject of history, ever more articulate in the face of social injustice and of all repressive forces which stand in the way of its fulfillment."²²⁸ Gutiérrez argues that human reason has become political reason. Politics is no longer simply something one does during one's free time. The construction of the "polis" is a dimension "which encompasses and severely conditions all human activity." Politics is precisely the sphere where humanity exercises the critical freedom it has won throughout

²²⁶ Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [29, 45, 64].

²²⁷ Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [29, 46, 64].

²²⁸ Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [30, 46, 65].

history.²²⁹ Gutiérrez argues that a person emerges as a free and responsible human being. as a person in relationship with other persons, only within the political fabric.

Aside from this universality of the political sphere in human affairs, Gutiérrez also notes the increasing radicalization of social praxis in today's world. More and more, people are looking at the causes of their situation, and there is a growing realization that any radical change must necessarily include an investigation of these root causes. Gutiérrez is convinced that people are no longer satisfied with mere reform – it is revolution in the social order that is required, for reform merely perpetuates the status quo. Gutiérrez says:

To support the social revolution means to abolish the present status quo and to attempt to replace it with a qualitatively different one; it means to build a just society based on new relationships of production; it means to attempt to put an end to the domination of some countries by others, of some social classes by others, of some person by others. The liberation of these countries, social classes, and persons undermines the very foundation of the present order; it is the greatest challenge of our time.²³⁰

This radicality of social praxis, combined with his understanding of the universality of the political sphere, leads Gutiérrez to conclude that the political arena is necessarily conflictual. One either maintains the status quo (either through one's direct actions or by passive complicity) or one seeks to subvert it. Put in other words, one is either ideologically masking reality by maintaining the status quo as adequate to humanity, or envisioning the utopia of a new humanity where people are truly free. There is no room on the fence on which one can sit. As Christians, people must take sides and make a stand. In the past, emphasis was placed on the personal and spiritual demands of the Gospel message. Today, the historical and political dimensions of the

²²⁹ Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [30, 47, 66-67]. 230 Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [31, 48, 67-68].

message are being heard more clearly. Christian faith demands political action. How they relate is precisely the problem Gutiérrez is trying to reflect upon and why the notion of utopia is so important to his theology.

These initial reflections in Part II already indicate how important the idea of a just and humane society is to Gutiérrez's theology. Before we examine utopia in greater detail, however, let us first look at Gutiérrez's analysis in chapter 4 of the different ways the church-world relationship has been conceptualized throughout the ages and why he finds such models inadequate. This examination is important because Gutiérrez considers the relationship between the church and the world as part of the key question of the relation between faith and political action. ²³¹

Gutierrez analyzed the models of Christendom and New Christendom in *Lineas Pastorales*, discussed in the previous chapter. These two models will only be reviewed briefly here because Gutiérrez does not add anything new to the discussion in *A Theology of Liberation*. In *A Theology of Liberation*, however, Gutiérrez describes at greater length the third model, which he now calls the Distinction of Planes, the crises he believes that model faces, and therefore why it is no longer adequate today as a means of conceptualizing the relationship between the Church and the world.

In the Christendom mentality, the world is not seen as autonomous from the Church. Temporal realities are not viewed as having "an authentic existence" and thus, are used by the Church "for its own ends." The reigning understanding was that the Church is the exclusive depository of salvation; hence the saying "Outside the Church

Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [34, 53, 71].

Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [29, 45, 64].

there is no salvation." Since nothing outside the ambit of the Church can be saved, the Church feels justified in considering itself the center of the economy of salvation and can thus rightly assert its power vis-à-vis the world, including the political arena. Given this understanding, the lay Christian's task in the temporal sphere was clear – to work for the direct benefit of the Church. There was a close unity between faith and social/political life. Today, however, such a unity no longer exists, and thus, the theological categories of Christendom are no longer applicable. According to Gutiérrez, it could be potentially harmful if they lead to a thinking that is divorced from actual reality, or worse still, preservative of an oppressive socio-political order.

The New Christendom mentality grants more autonomy to the political sphere. This is due in large part to the Thomistic understanding that grace builds on nature, rather than suppressing or replacing it. Gutiérrez describes how Maritain uses this understanding to create a political philosophy which integrates modern elements. The task of building the human city then consists primarily in the search for a society based upon justice, respect for human rights, and human fellowship. The basis is not directly that of the Christian faith. As a result, the autonomy of the world is asserted vis-à-vis the ecclesiastical hierarchy in particular, which is then not supposed to interfere in political affairs since these are outside the Church's realm of competence.²³⁴

Gutiérrez notes, however, that the New Christendom mentality is still pervaded by what he calls an "ecclesiastical narcissism." For even though the understanding of the Church as a power in relation to the world has been modified, the Church still sees itself

Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [34, 53, 72].

Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, [36, 55-56, 75].

as at the center of the work of salvation.²³⁵ For even if what is sought is the creation of a just and democratic society, one of the main goals in this endeavor is the creation of conditions favorable to the activity of the Church in the world. The goal is the creation of what Gutiérrez calls a "profane Christendom," i.e. a society inspired by Christian principles.²³⁶

In *Lineas Pastorales*, Gutiérrez had two further models: Mature Faith and Prophetic Pastoral. In *A Theology of Liberation*, the Mature Faith model is discussed under the name "distinction of planes," while the Prophetic Pastoral model corresponds to the understanding Gutiérrez is currently propounding in the book.

In the Distinction of Planes model, as the name implies, there is a much clearer distinction between the Church and the temporal sphere. The autonomy of the world is more clearly asserted, and not only as regards the ecclesiastical hierarchy, but also as regards the Church's mission. The Church is not to interfere in temporal matters except through moral teaching, primarily through individual consciences. The Church then, visà-vis the world, is seen as having two missions – evangelization and the inspiration of the temporal sphere. The Church is not directly responsible for constructing the world. Gutiérrez concludes that this model is the one basically adopted by Vatican II. ²³⁷ Gutiérrez goes on, however, to point out that the Distinction of Planes model is not without its difficulties. In fact, he devotes an entire chapter of *A Theology of Liberation* to discussing the crisis of the model. There are two parts to this discussion: the pastoral level, and the theological level.

Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [36, 55, 75].

Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [36, 55, 75].

Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [38, 58, 79].

Gutiérrez notes that one of the most important events for the Church in recent decades has been the development of a mature laity. However, the Distinction of Planes model lays out the mission of lay apostolic movements as evangelization and inspiration of the temporal order, without direct intervention. Gutiérrez argues that this fairly narrow understanding precipitated a crisis for those lay apostolic groups, especially the youth, who wanted to take a more committed stance. The radical positions often taken by these groups, in response to some very dramatic contexts in which they found themselves, led to direct conflict with the official Church position, which, in Gutiérrez's words, postulated a certain asepsis in temporal affairs.

A further crisis on the pastoral level is occasioned by the greater and everincreasing awareness of the massive poverty that befalls much of the human population. This awareness is often accompanied by a greater sense of personal responsibility. Furthermore, it becomes increasingly clear that much of this poverty and oppression is caused by those who wield political and economic power – and that in a very real sense, the Church is sometimes allied with these powerful people and institutions. Gutiérrez argues that, in this sense, the Church cannot really be said to be neutral – the Church cannot say that it is not interfering in the temporal sphere. He asks pointedly whether the Church can claim to be merely tending to the religious sphere when by its silence or even approval it lends legitimacy to these oppressive regimes. He thus concludes that there is a breakdown in the application of the principle of non-intervention by the Church in temporal affairs. It seems intervention is permissible when undertaken in support of the

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²³⁸ Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, [39-40, 63-64, 81-83].

status quo, but wrong when undertaken in an attempt at meaningful socio-political change.²³⁹

On the level of theological reflection, Gutiérrez argues that the Distinction of Planes model also comes into question in two ways. The first is the growing acceptance of the autonomy of the world, or secularization. According to Gutiérrez, this word can be understood in two ways. In a narrower sense, secularization can be understood as a desacralization – "the liberation of humanity from mystical and religious tutelage." But Gutiérrez argues that there is a second, more positive, way of understanding secularization. It can be understood as a transformation of human self-understanding. Due in large part to scientific advancement, there is a move from a cosmological vision to a more anthropological one. 240 Humanity sees itself as a creative subject, one in charge of its own destiny. A quote from Shakespeare's Julius Caesar illustrates this point: "The fault, dear Brutus, lies not in the stars, but in ourselves that we are underlings." This understanding is confirmed by biblical sources, which clearly affirm the distinction between the Creator and the creation – which is itself the proper sphere of humankind, that of which we are stewards. As Gutiérrez argues: "Worldliness, therefore, is a must, a necessary condition for an authentic relationship between humankind and nature, among human beings themselves, and finally, between humankind and God."²⁴¹

This phenomenon leads to a reversal of the understanding of the Church's relation to the world. Whereas in the past, the world was seen and defined from the perspective of the Church, today, more and more, the opposite is true. The Church is seen in terms of

See Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, [40-41, 64-66, 83-85].

Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [42, 67, 86].

Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [42, 67, 87-88].

the world. The Church must define itself to "a world come of age." Gutiérrez foresees a future wherein the Church will have to live and celebrate its faith in a nonreligious world, a world which the faith itself helped bring about.²⁴² It thus becomes increasingly important for the Church to redefine its formulation of its faith – especially its understanding of its relationship to the world.

The other point of theological reflection which poses a challenge to the Distinction of Planes model is the understanding that there is only one call to salvation. Gutiérrez notes that a lot of emphasis had been placed in the past on the distinction between profane and sacred, temporal and spiritual, and natural and supernatural. He argues that today, given the theological evolution of the past years, the tendency has been to stress a unity which eliminates all dualisms.

Gutiérrez understands that the positing of the dualism was borne from a desire to protect the gratuity of the supernatural order. Hence, the concept of pure nature was theorized. He argues, however, that there is no such thing as a pure nature, ungraced by God. There never has been, and there never will be. He cites Karl Rahner's notion of the supernatural existential, that "the universal salvific will of God creates in the human being a deep affinity which becomes a gratuitous ontologico-real determinant of human nature.²⁴³ This understanding leads to a further understanding that people are not called by God as individuals but as a community. This is not so much a "vocation to salvation as a convocation."

Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [42, 68, 88].

Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [44, 70, 92].

Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [45, 71, 94].

Thus, we affirm the genuine possibility of grace in all persons, whether they know it or not. All are called by God to salvation. Gutiérrez agrees with Rahner here on the notion of the anonymous Christian.²⁴⁵ This understanding has moved the center of salvation from the Church and membership in it, to Christ, and the presence of Christ's Spirit. Gutiérrez points out the decline in the use of terms such as supernatural end and supernatural vocation. Rather, the word used more and more is *integral*. And for Gutiérrez, the most immediate consequence of this renewed understanding "is that the frontiers between the life of faith and temporal works, between Church and world, become more fluid." He then quotes Metz: "The Church is of the world: in a certain sense the Church is the world: the Church is not Non-World." Gutiérrez notes a further, and more important consequence:

This affirmation of the single vocation to salvation, beyond all distinctions, gives religious value in a completely new way to human action in history, Christian and non-Christian alike. The building of a just society has worth in terms of the Kingdom, or in more current phraseology, to participate in the process of liberation is already, in a certain sense, a salvific work."

Thus Gutiérrez concludes that the Distinction of Planes model is not adequate today for describing the relationship between the Church and the world, between faith and political action. It separates them too much. On the pastoral level, an understanding of the Distinction of Planes model (which holds that the church is not to interfere in temporal matters except through moral teaching) leads to a crisis on the part of committed Christians who wish to take a radical stance towards the transformation of the

See Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [194, 76, 94, n. 33].

Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [45, 72, 95].

Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [46, 72, 96].

Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [46, 72, 96].

world. On the theoretical level, an understanding of the Distinction of Planes model leads to the maintenance of dualisms such as natural-supernatural and temporal-spiritual, which Gutiérrez argues against. In contrast to the Distinction of Planes, both Christendom and New Christendom suffer from the opposite problem – not enough autonomy is given to the temporal sphere.

Gutiérrez argues that the only way the relationship can be properly understood is through the term "integral." This word is to be understood in the sense Gutiérrez uses it when he talks about integral liberation as a single complex process with three interdependent and inseparable dimensions. Utopia's role within this understanding of liberation has already been seen as that which bridges the gap between faith and political action without simultaneously collapsing the two into an undifferentiated unity.

2.5.3 "The Option before the Latin American Church"

In Part III (chapters 6-8), Gutiérrez describes the numerous changes that have taken place in individuals, communities, and nations – indeed the whole Latin American continent – that led to the birth of this new theology. This is consistent with his understanding of theology as a critical reflection on praxis – a new way of living out Christian spirituality in Latin America results in a new theology. Within Latin America, more attention began to be paid to the root causes of poverty and oppression. These negative realities are not seen as accidental, or fated. They are caused by an ideology, an unjust system, and in the face of this injustice, one cannot remain neutral. As shown earlier, utopia is the counterpart of ideology and it is precisely utopia which is needed to combat ideology. One must take sides. The Latin American Church, especially at

Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [45, 71-72, 95].

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Medellín, chose to side with the poor. Thus, theology is not just a critical reflection on praxis, but a reflection on a praxis lived out in a preferential option for those oppressed. Theology is to be undertaken from the epistemologically privileged position of the disadvantaged, from the "underside of history." For the unjustly oppressed people in Latin America, a new consciousness has dawned. More and more, they are realizing that it is not their divinely-willed fate to remain poor. More and more, utopian ideals are taking root. More and more, the poor begin to aspire for genuine liberation. Or as Gutiérrez puts it: "It is becoming more evident that the Latin American peoples will not emerge from their present status except by means of a profound transformation, *a social revolution*, which will radically and qualitatively change the conditions in which they now live." As already shown, utopia pertains to the vision of a radically new society – that which the quotation describes.

Chapter 7 deals with the Church in the process of liberation. Here Gutiérrez discusses the roles that the laity, the clergy and religious, and the bishops play. It is noteworthy that Gutiérrez describes Latin America in this chapter as a "continent of revolution." Furthermore, he notes that at Medellín, the Latin American bishops state that a liberating education is: "...the key instrument for liberating the masses from all servitude and for causing them to ascend 'from less human to more human conditions,' bearing in mind that *humanity is responsible for and the principal author of its success or*

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Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [54, 88, 115].

Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [61, 105, 133].

failure (emphasis added)."²⁵² Once again, the notion of utopia is being described without the term itself being used.

Gutiérrez concludes the chapter by discussing what he terms a new presence of the Church in Latin America. He notes the rise within the continent of prophetic denunciation of grave injustice. Then, borrowing Freire's term, he indicates the need for a "conscienticizing evangelization." He argues that a consequence of a well-understood evangelization is an "awareness of being oppressed but nevertheless of being *masters of their own destiny* (emphasis added). These concepts of conscientization, human responsibility for its own success or failure, and being master of one's own destiny, are all intimately tied up with the notion of utopia.

Chapter 8 is entitled "Statement of the Questions." It serves as a conclusion to the discussion of changes in Latin America in Part III. Gutiérrez phrases the questions as follows: "what is the *meaning of the faith* in a life committed to the struggle against injustice and alienation? How do we relate the work of building a just society to the absolute value of the Kingdom?" Gutiérrez, having laid the groundwork necessary for understanding these questions with the proper nuances, asks them here again, immediately preceding the section in which he provides his answers. The question Gutiérrez asks is what is the proper relationship between faith and political action, and other synonymous formulations.

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Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, [65, 110, 144], quoting "Education," no. 8 of Medellín.

Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [69, 116, 158].

²⁵⁴ Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, [74, 135, 168-169].

2.5.4 "Perspectives"

In the book's fourth and last unit, Gutiérrez argues that salvation must be effective in history even though it is realized fully only beyond history. Salvation then, "the communion of human beings with God and among themselves - is something which embraces all human reality, transforms it, and leads it to its fullness in Christ." Thus, the present time is given full value because history itself has ultimate meaning, according to God's promise. At the same time, this eschatological understanding warns us against granting history an absolute status -- for the fullness of the promise lies beyond history. What we do in history does matter. But what we achieve is never absolutized. There is a need for a continual (even perpetual) revolution, for we can never achieve the fullness of God's promise within history. We can never even perfectly imagine the exact shape of God's Kingdom – the utopian vision is simply our best effort at imagining what the Kingdom might look like in our historical situation.

Gutiérrez also argues here for a spirituality of liberation that centers on a conversion to the neighbor, especially the oppressed. Gutiérrez notes that we:

...have to *break with our mental categories*, with the way we relate to others, with our way of identifying with the Lord, with our cultural milieu, with our social class, in other words, with all that can stand in the way of a real, profound *solidarity* with those who suffer, in the first place, from misery and injustice. Only thus, and not through purely interior and spiritual attitudes, will the "*new* person" arise from the ashes of the "*old*." (emphasis added)²⁵⁷

This quotation, with its italicized portions, might help us see more clearly how easily the notion of utopia can be missed in Gutiérrez's writing, if we are not careful. Despite never

Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [118, 205, 256].

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Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, [85, 151, 187]. Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, [92, 161, 203].

mentioning the term utopia here at all, Gutierrez is talking about it. This emphasis on conversion to the neighbor is central to Gutiérrez 's theology of liberation, as anyone reading him would agree. But Gutiérrez is not just talking about conversion by individuals, but of society. Of what does this conversion consist? It includes discontent with the *old*, which we denounce as unjust. It believes in hope for the *new*, which we announce. This denunciation and annunciation would not be possible unless people *break with their mental categories* – unless they free themselves from ideology and embrace utopia. If they continue to think the way they have always thought, people will be subservient to the ideological apparatus which defends the status quo. People must free their political imagination and envision a new humanity in a new society, one characterized not by injustice and oppression but freedom and genuine solidarity. All these elements are precisely what Gutiérrez means when he talks about utopia.

It is at this point in the argument that the developed definition of utopia is found. The fact that Gutiérrez discusses the notion of utopia at length this late in the book only goes to illustrate how deeply intertwined the notion is with Gutiérrez's thought. Why? In order to truly understand what Gutiérrez means by utopia, a comprehension is needed of what Gutiérrez means by "theology" and "liberation" (Part I of *A Theology of Liberation*). Grasping the relationship between the church and the world, including the different ways the church has understood this relationship historically (Part II of *A Theology of Liberation*) is further required. The importance of the question of the relation between faith and political action, especially as this question is arising from the experience of the poor in Latin America (Part III of *A Theology of Liberation*), must also be understood. Finally, the importance of spirituality to the whole theology of liberation

(earlier section of Part IV of *A Theology of Liberation*) is a vital component of this process.²⁵⁸ It is only with all these discussions in place, with all the various nuances they add to our understanding, that Gutiérrez actually brings up for the first time the notion of utopia.

The last chapter of *A Theology of Liberation* is about poverty. In this chapter, Gutiérrez discusses three meanings of poverty. The first is the material poverty that countless people suffer – a poverty that frequently leads to people dying before their time. The second meaning he discusses is that of poverty as spiritual childhood (discipleship). Here he discusses the biblical notion of poverty, the "tiny remnant" that remained faithful to Yahweh. Finally, as synthesis, Gutiérrez talks about the third meaning of poverty – commitment to solidarity and protest. Gutiérrez views this meaning of poverty as an act of love and liberation. It is a poverty embraced due to a commitment of solidarity to the poor. It is a redemptive poverty because of this and because it is undertaken in protest against poverty. This, he argues, is an essential part of the mission of the church. The church must make itself poor in commitment to solidarity and protest, otherwise the church fails to fulfill its prophetic mission.

There is a fundamental reality, without belittling or demeaning the suffering of the materially poor (first meaning of poverty), that we humans are all poor and in need of liberation. As disciples of Christ (second meaning of poverty), we must realize that we, as a human race, all need to be artisans of our destiny. We must realize that as long as anyone is poor and oppressed, the whole body of Christ suffers. This should impel us to commit our lives in solidarity (third meaning of poverty) to the creation of a new society,

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The importance of spirituality to the theology of liberation will be highlighted in Chapter Three of this dissertation. See pp.

Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [169, 296, 363].

inspired by our utopian vision – a society in which no one is poor, where everyone is truly free and all of us live in genuine solidarity and communion with one another.

The conclusion of *A Theology of Liberation* (with some words and phrases underlined and acting as flags) signals that the notion of utopia is operative throughout the book. Even though Gutiérrez does not always explicitly use the term, the notion of utopia does indeed pervade *A Theology of Liberation*. A careful reading of the conclusion will provide greater insights into what Gutiérrez is saying now that consideration of the importance of utopia to his theology has been discussed.

The theology of liberation attempts to reflect on the experience and meaning of the faith based on the commitment to abolish injustice and to <u>build a new society</u>; this theology must be verified by the practice of that commitment, by active, effective participation in the struggle which the exploited social classes have undertaken against their oppressors. Liberation from every form of exploitation, the possibility of a more human and dignified life, <u>the creation of a new humankind</u> – all pass through this struggle.

But in the last instance we will have an authentic theology of liberation only when the oppressed themselves can freely raise their voice and express themselves directly and creatively in society and in the heart of the People of God, when they themselves "account for the hope," which they bear, when they are the protagonists of their own liberation. For now we must limit ourselves to efforts which ought to deepen and support that process, which has barely begun. If theological reflection does not vitalize the action of the Christian community in the world by making its commitment to charity fuller and more radical, if – more concretely – in Latin America it does not lead the Church to be on the side of the oppressed classes and dominated peoples, clearly and without qualifications, then this theological reflection will have been of little value. Worse yet, it will have served only to justify half-measures and ineffective approaches and to rationalize a departure from the Gospel.

We must be careful not to fall into intellectual self-satisfaction, into a kind of triumphalism of erudite and advanced "new" visions of Christianity. The only thing that is really new is to accept day by day the gift of the Spirit, who makes us love – in our concrete options to <u>build a true human fellowship</u>, in our historical initiatives to <u>subvert an order of injustice</u> – with the fullness with which Christ loved us. To paraphrase a well-known text of Pascal, we can say that all the political theologies, the theologies of <u>hope</u>, of <u>revolution</u>, and of <u>liberation</u>, are not worth one act of genuine solidarity with exploited social classes. They are not

worth one act of faith, love, and hope, committed – in one way or another – in active participation to liberate humankind from everything that dehumanizes it and prevents it from living according to the will of the Father. ²⁶⁰

Conclusion

It was mentioned earlier, but it bears repeating, that Gutiérrez agrees with Freire that it is only the poor and oppressed who can truly denounce and announce – it is only they who can truly conceive revolutionary utopias which seek to subvert the existing order. Does this understanding therefore exclude from the task of liberation those who are not poor?

Chapter 2 of *A Theology of Liberation* showed that Gutiérrez prefers the notion of liberation to that of development. Negatively, development seemed to imply only economic growth. Furthermore, it tended to foster undue dependence on the rich on the part of the poor. Liberation, on the other hand, allows for a more wholistic and comprehensive understanding. It promotes the idea and in fact entails that humans craft their own future, be creators of their own freedom and destiny. Otherwise, this freedom may prove inauthentic or temporary.

Another analogy/thought experiment here. Let us suppose a little boy befriends a caterpillar.²⁶¹ In their conversations, he learns about the difficulty of being a caterpillar, walking endlessly on dangerous ground and always in danger of being stepped upon. She, however, tells him of her certain hope – that one day, after a period of time in a cocoon, she will fly. After a few days, the caterpillar goes into the cocoon, and the little boy visits his friend frequently. Then one day, the boy sees his friend struggling

Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, [174, 307-308, 375-376].

It came to my attention after writing this that a similar analogy appears in *Zorba the Greek* (1946) by Nikos Kazantzakis.

painfully to break free from the cocoon. Let us suppose further that the little boy is able fully and sincerely to empathize with her pain. With all the noblest of intentions, the boy gets a knife and frees his friend, to end her suffering. What happens? The butterfly, prematurely freed from her cocoon, is unable to fly. Her wings were not able to develop properly as the struggle which would have forced much-needed blood into the capillaries of her wings was prematurely terminated.

The analogy brings up two points. First, we cannot "liberate" the poor. It is not just a matter of giving them money, as developmentalism implies. They must be the artisans of their own destiny. If we leave or lead them to be dependent upon us, we actually hinder the possibility of their genuine liberation. Had he known better, what would the little boy have done? He certainly would not have tried to "liberate" her. He would instead have guarded her cocoon from any external threats such as predators.

Also, he would have reassured her constantly that he was there with her, and that he cared for her. In much the same way, people have an obligation to "protect" the poor and oppressed. They must fight against any form of injustice and exploitation. To the extent that it is possible, they must also demonstrate and live out our solidarity with them, assuring them of our fraternal love. People must certainly not labor under the impression that they are messiahs who can and will save the poor.

This leads to the second point. Gutiérrez discusses three meanings of poverty in the last chapter of *A Theology of Liberation*, as we saw. The third meaning is relevant here – the understanding of poverty as commitment to solidarity and protest. All of humanity is poor (though not equally so, and this statement must not be taken as a trivialization of the suffering of the materially poor) because we are all in need of

liberation. As a human race, we need to be the artisans of our own destiny. For as long as anyone is poor and oppressed, the whole body of Christ suffers. This should impel people to commit their lives to the creation of a radically new society, based on their best effort at imagining how the Kingdom of God should look in their concrete context. In other words, people must envision a utopia where no one is poor, where everyone is truly free, and where all live in genuine solidarity and communion with one another; they must commit their lives to bringing this utopia about (with the caveat that people must continually revise their derived political actions as the utopias from which they emerge change due to changing circumstances or understanding).

One of the primary questions Gutiérrez is seeking to answer as he writes *A*Theology of Liberation is how to articulate properly the relationship between faith and political action. He sees this as a necessary and urgent question, especially in the light of Latin America, with its widespread and oppressive poverty (which definitely calls for strong political action), as well as its deeply-rooted and pervasive Christian faith. He argues that an undifferentiated collapse of these two poles is unacceptable, as is a complete separation. He carefully studies the Latin American context, including how ideology is used by the oppressive minority on the poor in order to perpetuate the system of injustice as well as the different historical responses by the Church through the pastoral models. Gutiérrez comes to the conclusion that it is only through the notion of utopia and how it instantiates our understanding of God's revelation for any given historical context that faith and political action can be meaningfully related; else what would result would either be a collapse of the two poles, or a divorce. Neither of these alternatives is acceptable to Gutiérrez. If one does not see the unacceptability of these

alternatives to Gutiérrez, one does not truly understand him. A clear understanding of the notion of utopia as mediating between the poles of faith and political action is necessary to a proper reading of Gutiérrez.

CHAPTER 3

LIBERATION FURTHER DEVELOPED: THE CONTINUING ROLE OF THE NOTION OF UTOPIA

Introduction

The question of the previous chapter was: how important is the notion of utopia to Gutierrez's theology? A glance at *A Theology of Liberation* might lead one to think that the notion is a fairly minor piece since it only receives four pages of explicit treatment. However, the previous chapter has demonstrated the centrality of the idea of utopia to Gutierrez's project. The fact that Gutierrez discusses utopia directly in only one section of the book should not blind the reader to its importance.

The same caveat holds for the subsequent books written by Gutierrez. A cursory glance indicates that the concept of utopia is hardly, if at all, mentioned in these later writings. Does this mean that Gutierrez no longer considers the notion important? On the contrary, this chapter argues that the idea of a future society based on greater fairness and justice continues to act as the necessary mediating bridge between themes Gutierrez wants to relate without identification.

Gutiérrez further develops his theological project in three books: We Drink from Our Own Wells, On Job, and The God of Life. In these, the question of the connection

between faith and political action, while not being absent or even distant, is not the central issue and therefore receives less explicit mention. Instead, Gutiérrez, through the use of parallel themes (gratuitousness – justice, contemplative language – prophetic language, and love of God – love of neighbor), turns his attention to the topics of spirituality (*We Drink from Our Own Wells*), God-talk (*On Job*), and the Triune God (*The God of Life*). The idea of a more just and humane world plays a role in these subsequent works and also can be related to the parallel themes. The function of utopia is retained, and recognizing this function enables a better understanding of Gutiérrez's theology as he develops it in these three books.

3.1 We Drink from Our Own Wells

In his first full-length book after *A Theology of Liberation*, entitled *We Drink from Our Own Wells*, Gustavo Gutiérrez writes about a spirituality of liberation.²⁶² The importance of discipleship and prayer to Gutiérrez's theology of liberation is not new, as Gutiérrez himself notes.²⁶³ This book then is to be read as an expanded treatment of the section of *A Theology of Liberation* entitled "A Spirituality of Liberation," where Gutiérrez argues that a theology of liberation requires a particular way of practicing the

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Gustavo Gutiérrez, We Drink from Our Own Wells: The Spiritual Journey of a People, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1984). First published as Beber en su propio pozo: En el itinerario spiritual de un pueblo (Lima, Peru: Centro de Estudios y Publicaciones, 1983). Jon Sobrino dedicates an entire chapter on We Drink from Our Own Wells in Jon Sobrino, Spirituality of Liberation: Toward Political Holiness, trans. Robert Barr (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 46-79. Gaspar Martinez provides a brief summary of the spirituality of liberation as found in We Drink from Our Own Wells in Gaspar Martinez, Confronting the Mystery of God: Political, Liberation, and Public Theologies (New York and London: Continuum, 2001), 139-141. Robert McAfee Brown provides a similar summary in Robert McAfee Brown, "Spirituality and Liberation," Saint Luke's Journal of Theology, June 1986, volume XXIX, no. 3, 175-179. See also William Duncan, The Political Philosophy of Peruvian Theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez (NY, Ontario, and Wales: Edwin Mellen Press, 2001), 68. While these authors provide accurate summaries, none of them discuss the role that the notion of utopia plays in Gutiérrez's presentation of a spirituality of liberation.

Gutiérrez, We Drink from Our Own Wells, 1.

Christian faith. 264 Liberation theology requires a concrete way of living the Gospel in solidarity with other human beings, centered on a conversion, or *metanoia*, in relation to one's neighbor. As he notes, this way of life, or praxis, includes a deep sense of the gratuitousness of God's love. 265 In *We Drink from Our Own Wells*, Gutiérrez notes that every great manner of exercising Christian discipleship is rooted in the great historical movement of the age in which it was formulated. As evidence, he cites the examples of the spiritualities of St. Francis of Assisi, St. Dominic, and St. Ignatius of Loyola, among others. 266 It is in light of this observation about these great Christian movements that people are to understand the spirituality of liberation that comes from Latin America. This manner of Christian praxis and reflection directs the way Latin Americans live their profound faith in the God of life amidst their situation of injustice, poverty, and premature death.

According to Gutierrez, a new way of living the Christian life is being born as Latin Americans "drink from their own wells," their unique experience as a people. Particularly relevant here are two characteristics of the Latin American people: they are poor, and they have a profound faith in God. This new spirituality is the Latin American Christians' way of living out their dual fidelity to God and the poor. Gutiérrez celebrates this new form of Christian life in Latin America. Note that what is new is not, of course,

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Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Teologia de la liberacion: perspectivas* (Lima, Peru: Centro de Estudios y Publicaciones, 1971) [116-120, 203-208, 253-260]. There are two editions of the English translation of this work: *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation*, ed. and trans. Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1973) and *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation*, rev. ed. with a new introduction by the author, ed. and trans. Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988). Unless otherwise noted, quotations are from the 1988 revised edition. Whenever possible, citations will be given in square brackets to the revised edition, the first English translation, and the first Spanish edition, respectively. See also Gutiérrez, *We Drink from Our Own Wells*, 138, n. 1.

See Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [117-18, 204-206, 255-257].

Gutiérrez, We Drink from Our Own Wells, 26-27.

the poverty or the faith in God. What is new is the investigation of the causes of poverty and the role that faith has in the process of freeing people from their poverty. As Gutiérrez puts it, "what is new is that the people are beginning to grasp the causes of their situation of injustice and are seeking to release themselves from it. Likewise unprecedented and significant is the role which faith in the God who liberates is playing in the process."²⁶⁷

In developing his earlier argument that Christian discipleship and prayer is inseparable from a theology of liberation, Gutiérrez is in part responding to the criticism that he has reduced the theology of liberation to purely political issues. Because *A Theology of Liberation* put such great emphasis on concepts like solidarity, commitment to the well-being of the poor, and the denunciation of injustice, it seems that some critics somehow missed how important spirituality is for Gutiérrez, even though spirituality is explicitly treated in *A Theology of Liberation*. In *We Drink from Our Own Wells*, Gutiérrez clarifies that such criticisms are inaccurate:

Solidarity is seen as a concrete expression of Christian love today, which seeks roots in the cultural traditions of the indigenous peoples of Latin America. A hasty and simplistic interpretation of the liberationist perspective has led some to affirm that its dominant, if not exclusive, themes are commitment, the social dimension of faith, the denunciation of injustices, and others of a similar nature. It is said that the liberationist impulse leaves little room for grasping the necessity of personal conversion as a condition for Christian life and for being aware of the place that sin and repentance have in our lives.

Such an interpretation and criticism are simply caricatures. One need only have contact with the Christians in question to appreciate the complexity of their approach and the depth of their spiritual experience. In the movement of solidarity with the poor and exploited there is no attempt to downplay the importance of the breaks that the gospel demands of us as a requirement for

See Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 116-120.

Gutierrez, We Drink from Our Own Wells, 20.

accepting the message of the kingdom; if anything, the movement calls rather for an emphasis on this factor (emphasis added). 269

The concern in this section will be to show that the idea of utopia, while scarcely mentioned in *We Drink from Our Own Wells*, continues to function in the spirituality of liberation that Gutiérrez further develops in this work. Recall that one of the central questions Gutiérrez was seeking to answer in *A Theology of Liberation* was that of the proper relationship between faith and political action, and that the notion of utopia was the key to his response. Faith, however necessarily related to political action, is not to be reduced to politics for Gutiérrez, and so in *We Drink from Our Own Wells*, Gutiérrez clarifies the importance of avoiding this reduction. (Indeed, Gutiérrez may be avoiding the term utopia in this work due to criticisms that *A Theology of Liberation* is reductively Marxist). In the first section of *We Drink from Our Own Wells*, Gutiérrez clearly situates the faith-political action question within the wider framework of a spirituality of liberation.

It is a serious historical mistake to reduce what is happening among us today to a social or political problem. Consequently, one shows a lack of Christian insight if one thinks that the challenges to spirituality are simply those raised by the relationship between faith and the political order, by the defense of human rights, or by the struggle for justice.²⁷¹

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Gutiérrez, We Drink from Our Own Wells, 96.

Arthur McGovern theorizes that papal criticisms of liberation theology, citing "obstinate persistence," which *may* be aimed at Gutiérrez, could be heavily influenced by the criticisms of Bishop Ricardo Durand (of Callao, Peru). McGovern discusses Durand's arguments that Gutiérrez, in using such concepts as "class struggle" is clearly Marxist. Given the strong influence of Marx and other Marxist thinkers on Gutiérrez's understanding of the term utopia, a desire to avoid such negative scrutiny may explain why Gutiérrez does not seem to use the term utopia as frequently as one might expect, given what I have argued is the notion's centrality to his thought. See Arthur McGovern, *Liberation Theology and Its Critics: Toward an Assessment* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989), 18-19. See also my discussion of Ratzinger's criticisms in Chapter four.

Gutiérrez, We Drink from Our Own Wells, 2.

Does this mean, then, that the question of the relationship between faith and political action -- and by implication, then, the role also of the notion of utopia -- no longer play an important role in Gutiérrez's theology? No. Gutiérrez emphasizes in We Drink from Our Own Wells that topics such as these remain urgent, and that adequate answers are necessary. However, he clarifies that these questions are viewed profitably only from within a larger framework, and that larger context is the understanding of liberation as a single complex unity of three interrelated dimensions.²⁷² The Gospel cannot and should not be reduced merely to issues of justice, or some other political and/or social considerations (corresponding merely to the first dimension of liberation). These issues are important, but Gutiérrez's theology does not reduce Christian faith to issues of political and economic justice since he is ultimately writing about people's faith in God and God's saving work in history as a whole. This involves aspects of personal and human conversion and liberation that are not reducible to the political or socioeconomic dimensions of a situation. Gutiérrez understands liberation as "an allembracing process that leaves no dimension of human life untouched, because, when all is said and done, it expresses the saving action of God in history."²⁷³

Two of these three dimensions are clearly presented in this following passage from *We Drink from Our Own Wells*:

The struggles of the poor for liberation represent an assertion of their right to life. The poverty that the poor suffer means death: a premature and unjust death. It is on the basis of this affirmation of life that the poor of Latin America are trying to live their faith, recognize the love of God, and proclaim their hope. Within these struggles, with their many forms and phases, an oppressed and believing people is increasingly creating a way of Christian life, a spirituality...for they are carving

Gutiérrez, We Drink from Our Own Wells, 2. See also Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [24-25, 36-37, 59-60].

Gutiérrez, We Drink from Our Own Wells, 2.

out their own way of being faithful both to the Lord and to the experiences of the poorest.²⁷⁴

Put in terms of the three dimensions of liberation, this new Latin American spirituality is a way of Christian life that lives out its faith in God (the third dimension of liberation) as it seeks to liberate the poor from their poverty (the first dimension of liberation). What is missing, of course, is the second dimension of liberation, which corresponds to utopia.

However, this second dimension is clearly invoked when Gutiérrez insists a few pages earlier in the book that central to this new spirituality is the concept of "solidarity." Gutiérrez describes solidarity as that "action that follows upon their (the poor's) new awareness of their situation of exploitation and marginalization, as well as of the role they must play in the building of a new and different society."

The notion of utopia, as previously shown, entails the imagining of a new, just, and humane society, and this vision then inspires and guides a people's actions for attempting to build said society. In other words, solidarity, the action through which the poor seek to liberate themselves from their poverty, depends upon their envisioning of a more equitable society; it is the very exercise of a people's political imagination that Gutiérrez defines as the notion of utopia in *A Theology of Liberation*.

An appreciation of the three dimensions of liberation and of the role the notion of utopia plays within liberation theology is the backdrop within which Gutierrez explicitly mentions the idea of utopia in *We Drink from Our Own Wells*. Regarding his own utopian vision, Gutierrez writes:

In the future, Latin American society will be judged, and transformed, in terms of the poor. These are the ones who in this foreign land of death that is Latin

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Gutiérrez, We Drink from Our Own Wells, 28.

Gutiérrez, We Drink from Our Own Wells, 21.

America seek what G. Garcia Marquez, in his beautiful address upon receiving the Nobel Prize, called the *utopia* of life: "Faced with oppression, pillage, and abandonment, our response is life....It is a new and splendid *utopia* of life, where no one can decide for others how they will die, where love will be certain and happiness possible, and where those condemned to a hundred years of solitary confinement find, finally and forever, a second chance on this earth (emphasis added)."

In the face of the premature deaths that their situation of poverty brings, the oppressed people in Latin America respond in terms of hope rather than despair. The massive injustice and oppression in Latin America impel the poor to envision a utopia, a state of affairs that is radically different from their current world. This new situation, as they imagine it, is marked by justice and freedom. Gutiérrez further explains how he understands the above quotation from Garcia Marquez:

In search of this *utopia*, an entire people – with all its traditional values and the wealth of its recent experience – has taken to the path of building a world in which persons are more important than things and in which all can live with dignity, a society that respects human freedom when it is in the service of a genuine common good, and exercises no kind of coercion, from whatever source.

All this we call the historical process of liberation, and with its ideas and its impetuosity it is sweeping all Latin America (emphasis added).²⁷⁷

This utopian vision, in Gutiérrez's theology, is always inspired by the coming of God's Kingdom, but is never thought of as *the* Kingdom, as seen in Chapter 2. Rather, it is a people's approximation of what God's reign could and should look like, given their concrete circumstances at a specific time. This utopian vision acts as a bridge between the eschatological ideal (fullness of the Kingdom) and the current state of affairs. Thus, the notion of utopia, as it functions in Gutiérrez's theology, promotes a commitment to the historical liberation of the poor while enabling faithfulness to the Kingdom and its

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Gutiérrez, We Drink from Our Own Wells, 27.

Gutiérrez, We Drink from Our Own Wells, 27.

values; moreover, it avoids the hubris that comes when people think they have an exclusive understanding of God's revelation.

The concept of freedom is central to this utopian vision. After all, the poor are not only shackled by various political, economic, and social factors. They are also threatened by an ideology that tells them that it is their destiny to be poor. Thus, genuine liberation must include not just economic and political liberation, but also the creation of a new society, where people are to be the artisans of their own destiny. These two aspects of liberation (first and second dimensions) involve human work in history. As shown earlier, the Gospel does not provide specific norms concerning the ideal human society. However, the Gospel does convey the idea or insight that the first and second dimensions of liberation never occur apart from the third dimension of liberation; namely, liberation from sin for genuine communion with God and others. Ultimately, the root of all oppression is a deep-seated alienation from God, self, and others, and it is only through God's grace that this alienation or sin can be overcome in human hearts.

This dissertation's claim that *We Drink from Our Own Wells* implicitly relies on the notion of utopia to mediate between faith and political action finds further support in Gutiérrez's treatment of the way in which the notion of solidarity serves as a bridge between the parallel themes of gratuitousness and justice. Solidarity is a key concept for the spirituality of liberation because it is essential to the genuine building up of

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Gutierrez writes explicitly about the relationship between freedom and the utopian attempt at a permanent cultural revolution in an earlier book: "To conceive of history as a process of human liberation is to consider freedom as a historical conquest; it is to understand that the step from an abstract to a real freedom is not taken without a struggle against all the forces that oppress humankind, a struggle full of pitfalls, detours, and temptations to run away. The goal is not only better living conditions, a radical change of structures, a social revolution; it is much more: the continuous creation, never ending, of a new way to be human, a *permanent cultural revolution*."

See, for example, Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [24-25, 36-37, 59-60].

community, and, for Gutiérrez, genuine spirituality is never a purely individual affair. He says that "the development of the community dimension of faith is a characteristic of Christian life in our day," and he points to the rise and continued growth of the base ecclesial communities as evidence of this.²⁸⁰

Gutierrez always understands solidarity, however, amidst the backdrop of the gratuity of the divine love. Everything humans have, including existence itself, is a freely given gift of God. Material prosperity is not intended by God for a select few. Therefore, humans have a duty to ensure that God's gift is made available to the intended recipients: all of humanity, including, especially, the poor. The recognition of gratuitousness enables one to see that solidarity is not an optional exercise of generosity on one's part, but rather a duty to give what was freely given. Thus, Gutiérrez argues that a full and genuine encounter with our neighbor "requires that we first experience the gratuitousness of God's love." 281 It is only after one has experienced and come to realize God's freely given love that one is able to love the neighbor disinterestedly, i.e. without expecting anything in return, from others or from God. One needs to be respectful of the personhood of others; to encounter them without any tendency "to impose an alien will upon them." Only thus is one able to enter truly into solidarity with one's neighbors.²⁸² Gutiérrez points out that this union of love of neighbor expressed as solidarity and love of God finds its perfect fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

The other is our way for reaching God, but our relationship with God is a precondition for encounter and true communion with the other. It is not possible

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Gutiérrez, We Drink from Our Own Wells, 128.

Gutiérrez, *We Drink from Our Own Wells*, 112. Gutiérrez is talking here about a specifically Christian love.

Gutiérrez, We Drink from Our Own Wells, 112.

to separate these two movements, which are perhaps really only a single movement: Jesus Christ, who is God and man, is our way to the Father but he is also our way to recognition of others as brothers and sisters. The experience of the gratuitousness of God's love – which is a basic datum of the Christian faith – is not simply a kind of historical parenthesis as it were; rather it gives human becoming its full meaning.²⁸³

Human beings can never do anything that would merit God's love. Gutiérrez makes this perfectly clear. 284 The gratuitous nature of this love, however, does not imply that men and women have nothing left to do. They cannot simply bask in the divine love without attending to the requirements of the divine plan of justice. The fact that God freely loves the human family does not preclude human action for the establishment of justice in society. Rather, it demands it. As Gutiérrez states in We Drink from Our Own Wells, the gratuitousness of the gift of the Kingdom "does not do away with effective action but rather calls for it all the more."²⁸⁵ People – both the rich and the poor - are impelled to strive for the creation of a society where all will be recognized for what they truly are: children of the one, true God who loves all. Faith in God and God's gratuitous love cannot then be separated from effective commitment to the establishment of utopia, a society of true justice.

However, Gutiérrez is careful in We Drink from Our Own Wells to avoid any triumphalism that leads to a belief that "my understanding" of Christianity is the only correct understanding. 286 For Gutiérrez, genuine Christian discipleship and prayer comes from an experience of God and the subsequent theological reflection and action which

²⁸³ Gutiérrez, We Drink from Our Own Wells, 112.

²⁸⁴ Gutiérrez, We Drink from Our Own Wells, 109-112.

²⁸⁵ Gutiérrez, We Drink from Our Own Wells, 108.

²⁸⁶ Gutiérrez, We Drink from Our Own Wells, 13-16.

must involve commitment to the liberation of the poor from all that oppresses them.²⁸⁷ However, he is quick to point out that spirituality is to be seen "as *a*, not *the*, way of being Christian. A spirituality is only one expression of that diversity of charisms in the church of which Paul speaks so often (e.g., 1 Cor. 12)."

The implications of *We Drink from Our Own Wells* for the relationship between faith and politics are much clearer when one links the book's reflections with Gutierrez's discussion of the notion of utopia in *A Theology of Liberation*. As Gutiérrez discusses in the later book, spirituality is one's way of living the Christian life. This discipleship demands solidarity with the neighbor, including a person's attempts at bringing faith to bear upon political options. It is the image or vision of a new society based upon the values of the Kingdom that allows people to relate meaningfully their Christian belief and their political action without risking the separation or the collapse of these two poles. The notion of utopia then allows the exercise of Christian discipleship to be faithful both to the Christian faith as well as to the concrete political demands of a specific historical situation.

3.2 *On Job*

The next book to be discussed is Gutiérrez's *On Job: God-talk and the Suffering* of the Innocent.²⁸⁹ In this book, Gutiérrez seeks to answer this question: how are people

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Gutiérrez, We Drink from Our Own Wells, 53.

Gutiérrez, We Drink from Our Own Wells, 53.

Gustavo Gutiérrez, On Job: God-talk and the Suffering of the Innocent, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1987). Originally published as Hablar de Dios desde el sufrimiento del inocente (Lima, Peru: CEP and Instituto Bartolomé de Las Casas, 1983). Roger Haight undertakes a fairly detailed analysis of On Job in Roger Haight, "The Logic of the Christian Response to

to speak of God in the face of massive, innocent suffering?²⁹⁰ As he answers this question in *On Job*, Gutiérrez deals again with the themes of solidarity, gratuitousness, and justice that were already encountered in *We Drink from Our Own Wells*. In *On Job*, through an analysis of the biblical figure of Job and his story, Gutiérrez discusses two further parallel themes which are necessary for proper discourse about God, especially in a context marked by oppression: contemplative language and prophetic language.²⁹¹ The topic of *On Job*, then, is theology itself; literally God-talk. More specifically, *On Job* is about the task of doing theology in a context characterized by innocent and widespread suffering. The notion of utopia, though never mentioned by Gutiérrez in *On Job*, continues to play an indispensable role as the necessary bridge which mediates between faith and political action. Without this notion, the way we talk of God runs the risk of falling into one of two dangerous extremes (that Gutierrez carefully avoids), extremes in which contemplative and political language are either unrelated or collapsed into an undifferentiated unity.

In Gutiérrez's analysis of the book of Job, the key question is the possibility of religious belief without self-interest.²⁹² Satan's wager with God is that Job has faith in God simply because he is living a charmed life (see Job 1:7-11). Furthermore, Job's theological counselors, who serve as a counterpoint for the investigation of the possibility

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Social Suffering," in *The Future of Liberation Theology: Essays in Honor of Gustavo Gutiérrez* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989), 139-153. A helpful summary of *On Job* can be found in Martinez, *Confronting the Mystery*, 146-150. Leonardo Boff provides an even briefer though no less accurate summary in Leonardo Boff, "The Originality of the Theology of Liberation," in *The Future of Liberation Theology: Essays in Honor of Gustavo Gutiérrez* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989), 38-47. See especially 40-41.

See Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, xxxiv and Gutiérrez, We Drink from Our Own Wells, 7.

Fr. Virgilio Elizondo pointed out in a private conversation that Gutierrez unites these two languages in the pastoral orientation of Gutierrez's theology.

See Gutiérrez, *On Job*, 5-6.

of disinterested religion, defend the principle of temporal retribution (see Job 8:5-7 and 11:13-19).²⁹³ This principle states that God rewards the good and punishes the wicked – in this life. The wretched must surely be sinners, and those who are living comfortably and luxuriously must certainly be virtuous.²⁹⁴

As Gutiérrez reminds us, Job comes face-to-face with this principle (and its limits) as he undergoes his miserable plight. Job is innocent, and he knows it (see Job 6:2-10 and 6:24-29). Nothing that his three friends, who are staunch advocates of this law of retribution, say to him can convince him otherwise. Yet Job is suffering untold horror, and so his friends and their idea that God must be punishing him, must be wrong – their logic falls in the face of Job's own personal experience. Thus, Job demands a confrontation with God, seeking a trial, as it were (see Job 23:4-7 and 31:35-37). Eventually, God does appear and speaks with Job, twice (first in Job 38 and 39 and second in 40:7-41).

Gutiérrez points out that suffering is bad enough as it is, but is made even more painful and poignant if it is innocent suffering.²⁹⁵ Job is an innocent sufferer, and as Job wrestles with his innocence in the face of the teaching on temporal retribution, the theology of his time, he comes to the realization that he is not alone in his plight. If he, an innocent man, can suffer so, then surely not everyone else who is suffering is guilty. Job's personal question to God now becomes one in solidarity with all other innocent sufferers, the poor of the world. As Gutiérrez puts it: "the answer he seeks will not come except through commitment to them and by following the road – which God alone knows

²⁹³ Gutiérrez, *On Job*, 5.

Gutiérrez, On Job, 21.

²⁹⁵ Gutiérrez, *On Job*, 11-15.

- that leads to wisdom. Job begins to free himself from an ethic centered on personal rewards and to pass to another focused on the needs of one's neighbor."²⁹⁶

God responds to Job through two speeches. In Gutiérrez's analysis, in the first speech (Job 38 and 39), Job learns about *gratuitousness*; and in the second speech (Job 40:7-41), he learns about *justice*. In the first speech, Job realizes that creation was made not because of human beings, for there are things which humans never know of; for example, there are animals that can never be domesticated (see, for example, Job 39:5-12). This de-centering of the human self helps Job to realize that the reason for creation is divine freedom. Creation, as a manifestation of God's love, is gratuitous. God cannot and should not be pigeonholed into what our religious ideas make of God. God is free; otherwise, God would not be God.²⁹⁷ In other words, the principle of temporal retribution is itself a human construct and does not adequately answer the question of suffering and God. God does not act based on our conception of justice. God acts gratuitously, and hence God is not the agent of the hardships that affect people.

Notwithstanding this assertion of gratuitousness in the first speech, the book of Job makes it clear in the second speech that God does indeed want justice, though perhaps not as anticipated by the human intellect. However, God cannot impose this divine justice because God has made Godself "weak." Gutierrez writes in *On Job:*

God wants justice indeed, and desires that divine judgment (*mishpat*) reign in the world; but God cannot impose it, for the nature of created beings must be respected. God's power is limited by human freedom; for without freedom God's justice would not be present within history. Furthermore, precisely because

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Gutiérrez, On Job, 31.

²⁹⁷ Gutiérrez, *On Job*, 72-77.

human beings are free, they have the power to change their course and be converted. The destruction of the wicked would put an end to that possibility.²⁹⁸

Thus, God's freedom and desire for justice must always be understood within the context of human freedom and responsibility.²⁹⁹

These notions of justice and gratuitousness are especially important, then, for Gutiérrez's study of Job. 300 In fact, Gutiérrez states that "to see what the true relationship is between justice and gratuitousness; this is the key to the interpretation of the Book of Job." But how are the ideas of gratuitousness and justice related to each other? It would seem that they oppose each other. The notions of justice and gratuitousness are implicitly connected in Gutierrez's thought by means of the notion of utopia. Although Gutierrez never uses the word "utopia" in On Job, he does rely on the idea to which "utopia" refers. The idea of a new, just, and humane society runs throughout Gutierrez's argument, as the following passage shows:

Job had spoken of his littleness, his insignificance – that is, the littleness and insignificance of any human being as compared with God and God's creative work. Yahweh accepts this acknowledgement with a corresponding expression of humility: Yahweh too has limits, which are self-imposed. Human beings are insignificant in Job's judgment, but they are great enough for God, the almighty, to stop at the threshold of their freedom and ask for their collaboration in the building of the world and in its just governance. 302

²⁹⁸ Gutierrez, On Job, 77.

Roger Haight argues that the concept of human freedom and responsibility in relation to God's self-imposed weakness can be considered a third language in On Job. See Haight, "The Logic of the Christian Response," 145.

The significance of these two parallel themes was also discussed in Gutiérrez, We Drink from Our Own Wells.

³⁰¹ Gutiérrez, On Job, 82.

³⁰² Gutiérrez, On Job, 79.

God's respect for humans, even in their insignificance, is a reminder of God's gratuitousness. Human beings did not create the world, and they cannot save themselves. Ultimately, the fullness of liberation can come only at the end of history and from God alone. However, God does desire that justice which we can establish in history. God desires better political, economic, and social conditions for humankind (the first dimension of liberation). Moreover, because of self-imposed "weakness" or restraint, God cannot create justice in history for the human family or in spite of the human family. God chooses to rely on human cooperation. The building of a world that is in accordance with a utopian vision, derived from the Gospel, is a human task, as Gutierrez argued in A Theology of Liberation.

Flowing from this discussion of the parallel themes of gratuitousness and justice, Gutiérrez proposes two languages by which we can speak correctly about God, especially in a situation characterized by innocent suffering. The first of these modes of discourse is what Gutierrez calls contemplative language. This form of God-talk refers to the gratuitousness of the divine love. The other form of discourse is what Gutierrez calls prophetic language. This form of God-talk refers to the divine love's demand for the establishment of justice. 303

Gutiérrez recalls Job's realization that his plight is shared by many, and this realization led Job to an awareness of the need for seeking justice in solidarity. If one is aware of the suffering of others, and if one is convinced that God, who has a special love for the poor, is against such suffering, then one will be impelled to speak out about this

303 Gutierrez, On Job, 95.

injustice. One will prophetically denounce as sin any and all forms of oppression, since these are all contrary to the will of God who loves the poor.³⁰⁴

Gutiérrez is quick to point out, however, that the prophetic is not the only way to speak of God, nor does he believe that it is sufficient in itself. Gutiérrez argues that such prophetic discourse must be rooted in contemplative language, the basis of which is the realization and grateful acceptance of God's gratuitous love. 305 Initially, according to Gutierrez, Job's demand for justice (for himself and others) blinded him to the gratuitousness of God's love. His logic then was thus: given the injustice going on, how can we say that God loves us? Now that Job realizes this gratuitousness, now that he is utterly convinced of God's loving goodness, he must not be blind to the demands of justice. He should not say that since God loves us gratuitously, then God should be left to do everything. The key move is to situate justice within the framework of God's gratuitous love. Gutiérrez argues that it is only by viewing it thus that we can truly understand God's predilection for the poor. The poor are not loved because of any special virtue that they have. They are loved gratuitously, because God is love, and not because God "has" to love them in order to comply with a moral order. Thus, justice and gratuitousness are intimately connected. The divine justice is grounded on the divine love, not on a theological construct that predetermines how God should and should not act.

Gutiérrez summarizes the connection between contemplative and prophetic language in this passage:

Gutiérrez, On Job, 88.

Gutiérrez, On Job, 91.

Gutiérrez, On Job, 88.

Without the prophetic dimension the language of contemplation is in danger of having no grip on the history in which God acts and in which we meet God. Without the mystical dimension the language of prophecy can narrow its vision and weaken its perception of the God who makes all things new (Rev. 21:5). Each undergoes a distortion that isolates it and renders it unauthentic.³⁰⁷

If only contemplative language is used, there is a danger of being irrelevant to history and unresponsive to the historical demands made by the situation of innocent suffering. If only prophetic language is used, however, there is a risk of losing sight of God's gratuitous love and forgetting the absolute necessity of grace.

Although he does not mention it in his discussion of contemplative and prophetic discourse, Gutierrez implicitly relies on the notion of utopia as he speaks about the goal of constructing a just and humane society.

Emphasis on the practice of justice and on solidarity with the poor must never become an obsession and prevent our seeing that this commitment reveals its value and ultimate meaning only within the vast and mysterious horizon of God's gratuitous love. Furthermore, the very building of a just society requires a stimulus and an enveloping atmosphere that gratuitousness alone can supply (emphasis added).³⁰⁸

As this quotation indicates, building a just society for Gutiérrez requires both an exceptional motivation and a goal that far surpasses the creation of an equitable world for all. As shown earlier, especially in *A Theology of Liberation*, this "vast and mysterious horizon" that impels humankind is the fullness of three-dimensional liberation that will only be completely realized in the Kingdom of God. Yet this compelling and motivating horizon of God's gratuitous love must give rise to imaginative, utopian visions of a just society if it is to inspire the practice of fairness for which Gutiérrez calls. Without this utopian vision guiding action, God-talk, both contemplative and prophetic, runs the risk

308 Gutiérrez, On Job, 96.

³⁰⁷ Gutiérrez, On Job, 96.

of not only sounding, but being, empty. In other words, to appreciate fully Gutierrez's discussion of the movement between gratuitousness and justice, especially in relation to the issue of faith and politics, readers must recall the idea of utopia from *A Theology of Liberation*.

Without the notion of utopia functioning in its necessary mediating role, the readers of *On Job* could very easily have their thoughts on faith and politics fall into one or the other of two unacceptable extremes, both of which Gutiérrez clearly warns against. On one hand, they could envision contemplative language and prophetic language moving along parallel, non-intersecting planes. In this case, religious belief would be wholly separate from social and political issues. On the other hand, they could see contemplative language and prophetic language being collapsed into an undifferentiated unity, and, in this case, the church and state would no longer be separate. One would control the other, and Gutierrez wants neither of these two extremes.

As regards the first danger, that of having no intrinsic connection between the contemplative and prophetic languages, Gutierrez's readers may end up thinking along the following lines: God loves us, gratuitously. There is nothing we can do to earn God's love. There is nothing we have to do in order to earn God's love. As St. Paul reminds us: "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rm. 8: 38-9)." So we have nothing to worry about, really. The massive injustice and oppression that leads to so many premature deaths is surely unfortunate, but ultimately not a problem because not even death can separate us from God's gratuitous love. The poor who die

prematurely will go to heaven in the end, anyway. Though people continue to speak (and act) prophetically against injustice, this concern for justice is not integrally related to their hope for salvation and so is of little ultimate significance. Even if nothing really changes historically, human beings are fine, because God loves us gratuitously.

The second danger is that of collapsing contemplative language with prophetic language. The thinking could go like this: God loves us, gratuitously. We are the chosen people of God, God's church. We are the ones who have received God's revelation. We alone know what God's Kingdom is, and we are the only ones privileged and authorized to make a determination of how the Kingdom is to be furthered in history. Thus, when we speak prophetically, we are speaking with God's own authority. We are truly prophets. Whatever determination we make of how things are to be in the political or economic realms, we come to this determination through God's revelation. Those people who oppose our political plans are heretics. After all, did the Lord not say, "whoever is not with me is against me?" (Mt. 12:30)

In the final analysis, Gutierrez's reflections on gratuitousness and justice in *On Job* clearly stand in continuity with *A Theology of Liberation* only if they implicitly presuppose an understanding of how the notion of utopia operates in reflection on God and society. That is, faith and political action must continue to be related through utopia if Gutiérrez's argument in *On Job* for a necessary relation between contemplative and prophetic language is to be successful. As was the case with gratuitousness and justice in *We Drink from Our Own Wells*, so also in *On Job* the themes of contemplative and prophetic language also require this bridge which unites both poles without collapsing the two. People cannot just talk about God's gratuitous love, especially in the face of

massive, innocent suffering, without any reference at all to God's desire for justice.

Moreover, they also cannot speak prophetic language as though the fullness of the Reign of God could be equated with any of their historical plans to achieve a more just society. As a church, people serve the Kingdom, but the Church is not the Kingdom, and the notion of utopia helps guard against any triumphalism or reductionism. At the same time, the notion of utopia guards against a divorce of humankind's political actions from faith insofar as the utopian vision is precisely inspired and animated by the values of the Kingdom (the "vast and mysterious horizon") which people seek. 309 The notion of utopia provides the vision and inspires the resultant concrete historical plan that gives direction and specificity to prophetic language. Without this specific utopian vision and concomitant political action, which is meant to create a new society where there will be no injustice, prophetic denunciation will not be credible. The notion of utopia guarantees that prophetic actions on behalf of justice are never reduced to mere activism, independent and oblivious of God's gratuitous love.

To be sure, Gutiérrez does not discuss utopia or the importance of its mediating function between contemplative and prophetic language, between God's gratuitousness and God's justice here in *On Job*. Why not? This dissertation argues that he presumes that specification found in *A Theology of Liberation* and here only develops aspects that needed further clarification. The role of the notion of utopia is so obvious to Gutierrez that he has not explicitly discussed it in *On Job*. In any case, Gutiérrez continues to maintain these terms in a way that unites without collapsing, that bridges without separating. In order to achieve this mediation, the notion of utopia continues to function as the unspecified bridge Gutiérrez needs.

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Gutiérrez, On Job, 96.

3.3 The God of Life

The last book of Gutiérrez to be investigated is *The God of Life*. In this book, Gutiérrez presents his understanding of the Triune God through a close examination of scriptures. *The God of Life* thus further specifies Gutiérrez's theological project by giving a fuller definition to the identity of the God whom people experience in their spirituality (of which *We Drink from Our Own Well* speaks), and whom they speak about in the God-talk discussed in *On Job*.

The book itself has three main parts, corresponding with the three divine persons, Father, Son, and Spirit. The first part seeks to answer the question: What is God? It answers that God is a God who is Love, both Father and Mother. The second part seeks to answer the question: Where is God? It responds that God abides in the Kingdom that Jesus proclaims. The third part seeks to answer: How are we to speak of God? It answers that we are to talk about God according to the prompting of the Holy Spirit. As will become evident, utopia continues to structure Gutierrez's thought about the relation of faith and politics even in this theological focus on the triune God.

3.3.1 God is Love

"God is love" (1 Jn. 4:8). For Gutiérrez, this sentence sums up the biblical revelation about who God is. Love gives life, and all that exists does so because God is

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Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The God of Life*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991). Originally published as *El Dios de la Vida* (Lima, Peru: Instituto Bartolomé de las Casas-Rimac and CEP, 1989). This text is a greatly expanded version of the book, published in 1982 under the same title, by CEP. Martinez provides a brief summary in *Confronting the Mystery*, 142-143 especially. James Nickoloff, an acknowledged expert on Gutiérrez's thought, writes an excellent book review in *Horizons* volume 20 Spring 1993, 157-158. See also Terence Tilley's review in *Modern Theology* volume 9 January 1993. 88-89.

their source. 311 God gives life because God is life. God is not forced to create. God does so freely, out of love. God is not a liberator because God liberates. It is precisely the other way around – God liberates because God is a liberator. 312 Gutiérrez emphasizes the transcendence and primacy of God. God's being gives meaning to God's actions in history.

The God of Life manifests love by forming a family of equals through an act of liberation in which God does, and demands, justice amid the people and enters into an irrevocable covenant with them in history. Liberation, justice, and covenant imply one another; each is necessary for the full meaning of the others. These actions reveal to us a living, holy, faithful God who leads believers to certain kinds of behavior (emphasis added). 313

These three italicized words, then, describe how the first part is structured. Chapter 1 talks about God as life, Chapter 2 talks about God as holy, and Chapter 3 talks about God as faithful. Gutiérrez concludes this first part with a chapter on idolatry and death – the other choice, so to speak. If we are not for the God of Life, then we are for the idols who demand death as sacrifice.

In Chapter 1, Gutiérrez is operating from one of his most central convictions – that oppression in any form ultimately means death.³¹⁴ This reflection on the suffering of his own Latin American people leads him to study the analogous experience of suffering undergone by the Israelites during their slavery in Egypt. Gutiérrez argues that in the Exodus, God liberates the Israelites from their oppressive situation and thus manifests Godself as a God of life.

312 Gutiérrez, The God of Life, 2.

313 Gutiérrez, The God of Life, 2.

314 Gutiérrez, The God of Life, 3.

³¹¹ Gutiérrez, The God of Life, 1.

Gutiérrez notes that Israel's faith in God is rooted in the exodus (see, for example, Ex. 3: 7-10). The people of Israel express their faith by narrating what God has done for them in history, by freeing them from slavery in the land of Egypt. 315 Israel's God is not abstract or impersonal, but a God who cares. And God's actions require that the people obey God's commandments. God's actions on behalf of God's people necessitate a certain way of behaving on their part.³¹⁶ It is a covenant, but note that the covenant is not forced upon the Israelites. It is a free choice, a gift but not an indifferent choice, like a choice between Coke and Pepsi. It is literally a choice between life and death, and God enjoins us to choose life. Nonetheless, it is a free choice. Gutiérrez cites the book of Deuteronomy: "I call heaven and earth today to witness against you: I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choose life, then that you and your descendants may live, by loving the Lord, your God, heeding his voice, and holding fast to him" (Dt. 30:19-20).

Gutiérrez further specifies this ethical choice for life by linking it with the need for meaningful social change – the creation of a new society. He cites the Book of Wisdom: "Court not death by your erring way of life, nor draw to yourselves destruction by the works of your hands; because God did not make death, nor does he rejoice in the destruction of the living (Wis. 1:12-13)." God did not make death, nor the unjust circumstances in society that lead to so many premature deaths. It is therefore incumbent upon people to make the change. Gutiérrez writes: "It is up to us to transform the time in which we live; it is our responsibility to change the course of events. There is no room,

³¹⁵ Gutiérrez, The God of Life, 4.

³¹⁶ Gutiérrez, The God of Life, 5.

then, for an easy resignation that seeks reasons, including religious reasons, to hide our cowardice." ³¹⁷

Gutiérrez does not just look to the Old Testament, of course. The surest sign that God is a God of life is Jesus himself, especially in his passion, death, and resurrection. For Gutiérrez, the resurrection, which confirms that God is a God of life, is central to our identity as Christians. He argues, furthermore, that belief in the resurrection necessitates that people defend the lives of the weakest members of our society. They must defend those whose lives are constantly threatened. They must "assert life in the face of death" because the message of the resurrection is clear – the final word in history belongs to life, not death.³¹⁸

In Chapter 2, Gutiérrez elaborates on the importance of God being called *Go'el* in the Bible. This word means "liberator" or "defender" or "redeemer." He then proceeds to cite numerous scripture passages describing God acting as a *go'el* for God's people. God always acted on behalf of the weak and the poor. Israel itself was not made the chosen nation because it was strong, but the exact opposite. Because of God's goodness and love, God acts gratuitously in history for the poor and oppressed as their *go'el*.

This action or irruption into history does not "water down" God, however. God remains "wholly other," utterly transcendent – the Holy One. 320 In fact, God's actions on

Gutiérrez, *The God of Life*, 14-15.

Gutiérrez, *The God of Life*, 16.

Gutiérrez, *The God of Life*, 20.

Gutiérrez, *The God of Life*, 26-27.

behalf of God's people, sanctifying them, is given by God as proof of God's own holiness. Gutiérrez cites Ezekiel 36:23-27:

I will prove the holiness of my great name, profaned among the nations, in whose midst you have profaned it. Thus the nations shall know that I am the Lord, says the Lord God, when in their sight I prove my holiness through you. For I will take you away from all the foreign lands, and bring you back to your own land. I will sprinkle clean water upon you to cleanse you from all your impurities, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. I will give you a new heart and place a new spirit within you, taking from your bodies your stony hearts and giving you natural hearts. I will put my spirit within you and make you live by my statutes, careful to observe my decrees.

Gutiérrez notes that the nation being restored to life, to the extent that it practices justice and righteousness, causes it to bear witness to the God who liberates. To establish justice prolongs God's liberating action, embodying fidelity to the covenant between God and God's people, and is a step toward the fullness of life.³²¹ Gutiérrez clarifies this relationship between faith, liberation, and working for justice in this next passage:

The norm set for the behavior of the people whom the God of life brings into existence is precisely that they should give life. This means acting in such a way that life is asserted against every power that seeks to destroy it; against death and therefore against oppression, hunger, selfishness, sickness, injustice, and, in the final analysis, against sin, which is the characteristic stamp of death.

In fact, liberation from sin goes to the root of evil; it means that in the Bible the process of transformation leading to a just society and a new kind of human being is an experience and way of holiness.³²²

The above passage demonstrates how Gutiérrez's three dimensions of liberation are operating in *The God of Life*. Gutiérrez once again affirms that in the ultimate

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Gutiérrez, *The God of Life*, 28.

Gutiérrez, *The God of Life*, 28.

analysis, liberation is a redemption from sin (third dimension), the root of all injustice. Liberation from sin necessarily includes, but is not limited to, freedom *from* that which oppresses us in history (hunger, injustice, selfishness, etc. – first dimension) *for* a new life in a new society characterized by justice. As shown before, the creation of the new humanity in a new society operates on the level of utopia (second dimension) because the gospel does not provide a blueprint for this new creation – it is up to human beings to envision and try to instantiate it as best they can.

In the next section, Gutiérrez talks about the covenantal relationship that God establishes with God's people. He describes this relationship as one of "mutual belonging." He describes God's constant fidelity, which is in stark contrast with humankind's infidelity. People frequently turn away from God and worship idols. God is a jealous God who demands that we worship only God, for only God is truly worthy of worship. This worship that God demands of human beings, though, should go hand in hand with the establishment of justice, lest it be empty and meaningless. Gutiérrez cites a passage from Isaiah:

This, rather, is the fasting that I wish:

Releasing those bound unjustly,
Untying the thongs of the yoke;
Setting free the oppressed,
Breaking every yoke;
Sharing your bread with the hungry,
Sheltering the oppressed and the homeless;
Clothing the naked when you see them,
And not turning your back on your own. (Is. 58:6-7)

Gutiérrez, *The God of Life*, 33-37.

Gutiérrez, *The God of Life*, 45.

Gutiérrez argues that prayer should not be resorted to so that what we must do as regards the creation of a just society needs to be taken over by God. Gutiérrez says that "prayer to the God who liberates and does justice does not remove us from the historical process, but rather compels us to immerse ourselves in it so that we may responsibly exercise our solidarity with the poor and the oppressed." Prayer is not to be seen as a means for escaping history. Rather, genuine prayer should lead us precisely to an immersion in history such that justice can be done and solidarity be achieved with the poor – the words we pray need to be enfleshed in our praxis. Gutiérrez reminds us that gratuitousness and justice are fundamental dimensions of Christian life. 326

Once again Gutiérrez's dimensions of liberation can be seen operating here, this time in conjunction with the parallel themes of gratuitousness and justice which were examined earlier. People's faith (third dimension) is rooted in an experience of God's gratuitous love and leads to genuine prayer, which the quote from Isaiah points out must always be lived out in concrete actions for justice (first dimension). The second dimension, while not explicitly mentioned, is implied because Gutiérrez never advocates a direct relationship between faith and people's historical actions for justice. Isaiah tells people that they should free the oppressed and break the yoke, but the scriptures cannot specify for us the exact shape of such a free society. Such an envisioning, and the subsequent attempts at actually trying to instantiate the vision, are on the level of utopia, and thus are the work of humankind.

In the next section, Gutiérrez contrasts the God of life with what he terms the idols of death. He notes that idolatry has always been a danger to every religious person.

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Gutiérrez, *The God of Life*, 47.

Gutiérrez, *The God of Life*, 47.

In fact, he says that the bible regards idolatry as a "permanent temptation." 327 Gutiérrez describes idols as anything we humans make that we take to be God. We place in these creations the trust that should be reserved for God alone. This is clearly wrong because God alone is God. But there is a further danger – idols always demand human sacrifices. Gutiérrez uses the example of money. He says that "the worship of Mammon entails shedding the blood of the poor." The love of money leads people to rob the poor, directly or otherwise -- on an individual as well as on a societal scale.

One of the key choices someone who professes to be a Christian needs to make then is between God and Mammon. Jesus clearly says that we must make this choice (Mt. 6:24). In the same Sermon on the Mount, Jesus exhorts us to "seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you besides (Mt. 6:33)." Through his analysis of this scriptural passage, Gutiérrez highlights the radicality of the demand made by the gratuitousness of God's love. ³²⁹ Trust in God's providence does not mean that we are to sit idly by and twiddle our thumbs and leave God to do everything. Gutiérrez says that we would be mistaken if we were to think that in this passage there is "any opposition between abandonment to providence and commitments within history."330

Gutiérrez then talks about his native country of Peru. He describes the oppression and injustice that are widespread there, and he says that a choice must be made. Are we to side with the powerful, those who protect the status quo because they benefit greatly

³²⁷ Gutiérrez, The God of Life, 48.

³²⁸ Gutiérrez, The God of Life, 56.

³²⁹ Gutiérrez, The God of Life, 59.

³³⁰ Gutiérrez, The God of Life, 59.

from it? Or are we to side with the poor, those whom God loves preferentially? A choice must be made. A non-choice is tantamount to choosing for the status quo.³³¹ And Gutiérrez makes it quite clear that the choice involved here is a choice between life and death. In whom do we believe – the God of life, or Mammon (or other such idols of death)?

To briefly summarize what has been seen in this first part of *The God of Life*, Gutiérrez argues forcefully for an understanding of God as precisely a God of Life, a God who is opposed to death. Gutiérrez argues that God acts in history in order to liberate God's people, out of God's utterly gratuitous love. God's gratuitous love leads to the establishment of a covenant that demands that people commit themselves to the historical liberation of humanity, especially the poor, and the creation of a truly just society, where all are free. Ultimately, people are asked to make a choice: between the God of Life, and the idols of death

Gutiérrez's three dimensions of liberation and the role that the notion of utopia plays within these dimensions are central to a proper understanding of what Gutiérrez is saying here. Belief that God is a God of Life and not of death leads humankind to be discontent with a situation that is characterized by death. This belief inspires a hope which fuels a vision for a better society, for which God does not provide an exact blueprint. It is precisely this hope-filled utopian vision that impels people to make an unshakeable commitment to the creation of a new society and enables them to do so without separating or collapsing their faith with their political actions. It is this utopian vision which enables human beings to judge and subsequently discern for themselves in concrete specific situations what is of God and not Mammon.

³³¹ Gutiérrez, The God of Life, 63.

3.3.2 The Kingdom is among You³³²

In this section, Gutiérrez is seeking to answer the question, "Where is God?" The question arises from the concrete historical suffering being experienced by the Latin American people. Gutiérrez notes that the very asking of the question already implies a desire to be near the Lord, to make our own God's goal for history. 333 He argues that the God of the Bible is inseparable from God's project, the Kingdom. In fact, for Gutiérrez, any understanding of God that is separate or divorced from the Kingdom is already tantamount to idolatry, for people are then crafting God into an image they desire God to be, different from whom God really is. 334 In this section where Gutiérrez develops his understanding of the Kingdom, it will be shown that despite some ambiguity on the meaning of utopia, his earlier argument for the need for a mediation between faith and political action is sustained.

Gutiérrez then discusses the Kingdom of God at great length. In this discussion, Gutiérrez describes the Kingdom as a utopia (to be shown in the following paragraphs), but not in the precise sense with which he used the term in A Theology of Liberation.

³³² Antonio Pernia studies Gutiérrez's theology from the perspective of the Kingdom of God. He does not, however, discuss the notion of utopia and how this notion mediates, in Gutiérrez's theology, between the Kingdom and its growth in history. Ironically, he discusses the notion of utopia in his study of Leonardo Boff. See Antonio Pernia, God's Kingdom and Human Liberation: A Study of G. Gutiérrez, L. Boff and J. L. Segundo (Manila, Philippines: Divine Word Publications, 1990), 29-58 for his study of Gutiérrez and 59-96 for his study of Boff. For a discussion of the importance of the Kingdom of God as a unifying focus for liberation theology, see Jon Sobrino, "Central Position of the Reign of God in Liberation Theology," in Mysterium liberationis: fundamental concepts of liberation theology, ed. Ignacio Ellacuria and Jon Sobrino (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 350-388.

Gutiérrez, The God of Life, 67. The original Spanish uses the word "proyecto," which the English version translates as "plan." As will be made clearer in my later discussion, Gutiérrez is using the word "proyecto" here to refer to God's intention or goal for history, which is not to be confused with the specific plans through which we instantiate our utopian vision.

Gutiérrez, The God of Life, 67.

Instead, Gutiérrez is using the term utopia here in its more common meaning as an ideal state of affairs. This difference in usage is unfortunate because confusion in the understanding of what Gutiérrez is saying here can certainly arise.

Gutiérrez begins his description of the Kingdom by noting the strong contrast between life and death found in John's Gospel. He emphasizes that Jesus came in order that we may have life, and that in abundance (Jn. 10:10). This abundance of life is found in the Kingdom which entails an upheaval of the existing social order, where the idols of death currently hold sway.

Jesus, the Messiah, turns the reigning order upside down. In his effort to help his disciples advance along the way they have entered upon, he tells them that the truly great one among them is the one who serves and that he who would be first must be 'the slave of all.' This is the 'messianic inversion' that is a central element in the gospel message. The inversion begins with the Lord himself who, when he became one of us, intended not to be served but to serve. Service does not mean passively accepting the present state of affairs. Rather it implies initiative and creativity, the knowledge and strength needed to build a human, just and fraternal world. 335

Even while Jesus inaugurates this messianic inversion in history, Gutiérrez argues that this transformation of the reigning order still requires our initiative and creativity.

There are, of course, those who would say that such a radical new order is impossible, nothing but a pipe dream. They will argue that the current order is too firmly entrenched, or even that there is nothing wrong. To these people and their ideology, Gutiérrez responds:

There are some who may think that the promise of life in fullness cannot be carried out, but God is not one of them. That future state is not an illusion but a *utopian vision that sets history in motion*. The powerful, those who do not want things to change because their privileges are based on the status quo, are skeptical about any plan to establish a different social order (emphasis added).³³⁶

Gutiérrez, *The God of Life*, 93.

Gutiérrez, *The God of Life*, 88.

Once again, Gutiérrez reminds his readers that their utopian vision, by setting history in motion, is what enables them to work for the new social order.

Such a radical messianic inversion of the reigning order of course does not come easily in history. It will involve a lot of sacrifice and struggle against the forces of sin and death, but it can be done. Gutiérrez reminds us that "if we are to bear witness to the Lord's definitive victory, we must keep alive our hope in God's will to create a new world in which life shall reign."

Hope in God's will to create a new and better order of things comes from the fact that the process of creating this new world has already begun with the inbreaking of the Kingdom. The fullness of the Kingdom will only come beyond history. It is important to note here that a careful distinction must be made between utopian visions which help the kingdom's growth and the kingdom itself. Gutiérrez describes his eschatological understanding in the following passage:

The Kingdom, which is the object of God's free and unmerited plan, is a dynamic reality that, for the followers of Jesus, gives history its final meaning. "Final meaning," however, does not mean that the kingdom is located at the chronological end of the historical process. Rather, it is something that is, if I may coin a word, "kairologically" at hand and in process of being brought to completion. This twofold aspect is captured in the term "eschatology," which refers both to the future and to the historical present or, in other words, to an event that is already present but has not yet attained its full form. There is at work here a *dynamic vision of history* as set in motion by the gift of the kingdom (emphasis added). 338

Of course, history will not move of its own accord, unaided. As Gutiérrez says in the above passage, the gift of the kingdom inspires or sets in motion a dynamic vision of history. Thus, the confident hope in God's plan for victory does not remove from people

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Gutiérrez, *The God of Life*, 98.

Gutiérrez, *The God of Life*, 101.

the responsibility for acting or even for continuing to imagine and re-imagine the Kingdom for their time. For even though the Kingdom is a gift, a grace from God, it makes concrete and urgent demands upon people to "change our present reality, reject the abuses of the powerful, and establish relationships that are fraternal and just." People must imagine a utopia in Gutiérrez's precise sense from *A Theology of Liberation* and then also develop plans through which this vision can be instantiated in their concrete situation.

For Gutiérrez, it is the church's mission to further the Kingdom's growth. The church's mission is clarified in the following statement, even though Gutiérrez does not as clearly distinguish utopia from the kingdom here as he does in *A Theology of Liberation*. Nevertheless, for Gutierrez, it is never the fullness of the Kingdom that people envision, but only the utopian vision, proper to their finitude, that approximates it for their situation.

The kingdom urges the church to move constantly forward, for it is a utopia that has already begun to become a reality but has not yet attained its full form. The process goes on in history, but its completion will come beyond history. The deepest meaning of historical events for believers is that in and through them they receive the kingdom of God. 340

It is precisely God's gratuitousness and unmerited irruption into our history, culminating in the sending of Christ and his inauguration of the Kingdom, that serves as the basis for the utopian approximation of this Kingdom as clarified in *A Theology of Liberation*. Because the Kingdom has been inaugurated, people can precisely announce this as Good News. With this inspiring in human beings a vision for a new world order, one characterized by solidarity and communion, where justice reigns, people can and

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Gutiérrez, *The God of Life*, 102.

Gutiérrez, *The God of Life*, 106-107.

should denounce anything which opposes it. The hope in the certainty of God's ultimate victory – Christ's resurrection guarantees that life will be victorious over death – will continue fuelling efforts at creating this new society, regardless of the odds that may be faced at any given point in time.

It is important to note that utopia, as Gutiérrez uses the term in A Theology of Liberation, is never the fullness of the coming of the Kingdom itself. It is humankind's hope-filled vision of the future, fuelling the building up of the Kingdom in history. Thus, Gutierrez's notion of utopia is implicit in his argument that it is the Kingdom's coming that people announce, and all that opposes it that they denounce through their utopian visions. The Kingdom and its values are the basis for the hope and vision – of a new world order, a new society founded on freedom, justice and solidarity. The Kingdom cannot be created fully in history, nor can people equate their utopian vision and subsequent historical actions with it.

Gutiérrez concludes this section by discussing the parallel themes of love of God and love of neighbor. He states that these are the two basic dimensions of the Gospel, and that some of the tensions people experience in the Church are because of an improper interpretation of the relationship between these two Great Commandments.³⁴¹ An overemphasis on love of God to the relegation of love of neighbor as merely secondary or being a bonus diminishes the importance of people's actions in history. It does not make for an adequate response to the needs of the poor. At the opposite extreme, there are some who overemphasize commitment to and solidarity with others that the whole vista of God's gratuitous love is relegated merely to the background. Prayer, sacramental

³⁴¹ Gutiérrez, The God of Life, 137.

celebrations, and the drinking in of God's Word are incorrectly relativized or even trivialized. Gutiérrez maintains that such is not authentically Christian either.³⁴²

Gutiérrez insists that there is only really one love, with its dual expressions inseparable. After all, when we feed the hungry, we feed the Lord (Mt. 25:31-46). This is why, for Gutiérrez, "love of God and commitment to the poor (including love of ourselves) are central elements in the experience of those who believe in the God of life. The proper interrelating of these elements turns our faith into a journey, accomplished in solidarity, as followers of Jesus." Our loving service of the poor must then always be rooted in a prior recognition and appreciation of God's gratuitous love. Together, we journey towards the creation of a new humanity, inspired and set into motion by God's Kingdom and its values, where we will all live as genuine sisters and brothers under the Lordship of our one and true King.

3.3.3 How are We to Speak of God?

In this section, Gutiérrez relies heavily on the Book of Job and his previous analysis of it in *On Job*. In fact, Gutiérrez writes that this discussion "can now serve as a summary of the conclusions reached" in *On Job*. ³⁴⁴ Gutiérrez includes this section firstly because it completes the Trinitarian nature of his presentation on God, this section corresponding to the Holy Spirit. More importantly, the question of how properly to speak of God in a situation of injustice and suffering is of great importance to Gutiérrez. In this section, as he does in *On Job*, Gutiérrez describes the necessity for two languages

Gutiérrez, *The God of Life*, 137.

Gutiérrez, *The God of Life*, 139.

Gutiérrez, *The God of Life*, 203, n. 1.

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(contemplative and prophetic) which maintain in relation God's gratuitousness and desire for justice such that people are able to talk properly about God, especially in a situation characterized by injustice and suffering. As seen in the discussion of *On Job*, utopia remains the necessary (if implicit) term that unites the contemplative and the prophetic discourses without identifying or separating them.

3.4 Conclusion: A Summary of These Parallel Themes

Gratuitousness is a very important theme in Gutiérrez's theology. He constantly emphasizes that everything, ultimately, comes from God, out of God's goodness and love. Human beings cannot earn God's grace, and they cannot save themselves independently of this grace. However important gratuitousness may be in Gutiérrez's theology though, readers should not focus exclusively on this one theme. They cannot afford to delude themselves into thinking that God in God's goodness will solve all of the world's problems while they do nothing except sit idly by and sing Hosannas and Alleluias. This is especially true in a context like Latin America, where there are serious and urgent problems – innumerable people are dying unjustly before their time. Injustice is rampant and widespread. In reading Gutierrez's texts, readers should pay attention to the theme of justice as well as the theme of grace.

As in the discussion of faith and political action though, there is a danger of going to one extreme or the other; that is, in this case to emphasize solely the theme of God's gratuitousness or solely the theme of justice. Gutierrez's readers cannot allow an emphasis on the demands of justice to blind them to the gratuitousness of God's grace.

Gutiérrez is seeking to articulate a theology and a spirituality that gives the proper respect

and attention to these two very important theological concepts without falling into either of the two unacceptable extremes. This dissertation argues that he succeeds in this endeavor, and that his discussion of the three dimensions of liberation and the role that the notion of utopia plays are central to this success, because it is through the notion of utopia (understood in the precise sense of *A Theology of Liberation*) that people can meaningfully relate their faith in God's gratuitous love with their political actions for justice without separating or collapsing these two. The utopian vision is people's approximation, proper to their finitude, of the Kingdom which God gratuitously gives, and this utopian vision impels their concrete actions for justice in history to instantiate this ideal.

Gutierrez's discussion of contemplative discourse and prophetic language runs along parallel lines. Gutiérrez argues for the need for what he calls the language of contemplation, a language that expresses the gratuitousness of God's love. He also stresses the necessity of prophetic language, i.e. discourse that speaks of the demands made by this divine love, especially as regards the establishment of a true and lasting justice. Chapter two showed that, according to Gutierrez, faith and political action must be kept in a balance that can be achieved by means of the notion of utopia. This chapter has clarified that, in Gutierrez's view, speaking of God's gratuitousness and God's justice must be held in balance, and hence contemplative language and prophetic language must complement each other. How is this balance to be achieved? Here again the notion of utopia comes into play. Although Gutierrez does not explicitly use the word utopia in much of the writings reviewed here, he implicitly relies on it. Contemplative discourse and prophetic talk must function together so that they are not held in parallel and non-

intersecting lines nor reduced to an undifferentiated unity. In Gutiérrez's theology, this meaningful relation cannot be achieved adequately without the notion of utopia acting as a bridge, as it is explicitly discussed in *A Theology of Liberation*.

The last of the parallel themes discussed in this chapter concerns that of love of God and love of neighbor. The first of the two Great Commandments (see Mt. 22: 36-40) tells people that they must love God with all their hearts, souls, and strength. Faith tells people this. Their realization of the gratuitousness of God's goodness and love should lead to this. Contemplative language calls for this, but people cannot do just this alone. They cannot simply love God and yet be blinded to the needs of their neighbor, especially the poor for whom God has shown a preferential love. Hence, there is the second Great Commandment which tells people to love their neighbor as they love themselves. This is what political action should be geared towards – the establishment of God's justice here on earth. This is precisely what prophetic language calls for. As previously pointed out, people must avoid going from one extreme to another. There cannot be a focus simply on just loving one's neighbor, to the exclusion of loving God. This would not be Christian. Integration of both loves, of God and neighbor, is needed. According to Gutierrez, the ideal of a new society that makes concrete the values of God's kingdom enables us to achieve this integration. The notion of utopia is the bridge that allows for relation without separation or identification. The notion of a just and humane society functions as this bridge by providing a vision of a better society, approximating the Kingdom, and this ideal directs concrete historical actions (inspired by the values of the Kingdom and a recognition of God's gratuitous love for humankind).

One final point must be stressed. While the love of God – love of neighbor theme roughly corresponds to the other parallel themes (gratuitousness – justice, contemplative language – prophetic language, and faith – political action) and helps us better understand Gutiérrez's use of the notion of utopia, the correspondence is not exact. There is more to loving God than just believing in God, as there is more to loving our neighbor than just concrete political actions towards the creation of a better society. Thus, the theme of love of God – love of neighbor resists any reduction merely to the calculus of the relation between faith and political action. This confirms Gutiérrez's position that in any genuine liberation theology, spirituality is of great importance and cannot be reduced to the faith-political action relation. For ultimately, while relating faith to political action is certainly important especially in a context like Latin America, the joys, demands, and promises of the Christian life surpass what we do in the political sphere.

This chapter's analysis of three books by Gutierrez has shown that the logic of these books implicitly relies on a notion of utopia. Each book calls for the balancing of two truths, such as the theme of God's gratuitousness and the theme of God's justice. How is this balance to be achieved and maintained? It requires a reliance on the mediating concept of utopia, an idea of a political-social reality that approximates the kingdom of God. Although Gutierrez's theological reasoning depends on this envisioning of new world order, Gutierrez takes utopia for granted in the books examined here, rather than explicitly invoking the concept. It is unfortunate that such a central notion is not explicitly treated because it leaves Gutierrez open to misinterpretation.

Why did Gutierrez not explicitly treat the notion of utopia in these subsequent books? Two reasons immediately come to mind. One possible reason is that he already

treated the topic in detail in *A Theology of Liberation*. He may no longer have felt the need to explain it again – the concept of utopia and his explanation of its mediating function are assumed. The other possible reason is that certain people have misunderstood how he has used the notion of utopia. His non-use of the word explicitly in these subsequent books might be an attempt on his part to avoid misinterpretation. The next chapter deals with how two theologians have misinterpreted Gutierrez because they do not seem to have fully grasped Gutierrez's use of the notion of utopia as a mediating bridge between faith and political action.

CHAPTER 4

UTOPIA AND THE CRITICS

Introduction

The previous chapters have demonstrated how the notion of utopia plays an essential role in Gutierrez's theology. It is precisely the envisioning of a more just and humane society that allows for a fruitful relationship of Christian belief to the various areas of people's individual and communal lives.

This chapter looks at the concept of liberation and utopia from a different perspective – that of their critics.³⁴⁵ Two critics are discussed: Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI), in his roles both as a theologian and as the prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and Daniel M. Bell, Jr. of the so-called radical orthodox theological movement. Both of these critics articulate major but differing arguments against Gutiérrez's theology while also – and especially important

³⁴⁵ The following critics all develop parts of the Vatican critique. Ernest Lefever charges liberation theology with sanctifying class violence, and he understands the preferential option for the poor as excluding the non-poor. Michael Novak argues that liberation theology is Marxist. Richard John Neuhaus states that Gutiérrez's liberation theology uses an explicitly Marxist analysis of class struggle as normative for the church's life and teaching. See Ernest Lefever, "Liberation Theology as a Utopian Heresy," Face to Face, an Interreligious Bulletin, Winter 1987, 18-20; Michael Novak, Will It Liberate? (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1986); and Schall, ed., Liberation Theology in Latin America, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982), 382 for Neuhaus' comment. A summary of these and other critics, including a defense of Gutiérrez can be found in Robert McAfee Brown, Gustavo Gutiérrez: An Introduction to Liberation Theology (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990), 131-136. See also Arthur McGovern, Liberation Theology and Its Critics (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989).

for this dissertation's purposes – highlighting the importance to Gutiérrez's theology of the three dimensions of liberation. However, both misjudge Gutiérrez's work largely because they misunderstand the notion of utopia and the mediating role it plays in Gutiérrez's theology. Because Ratzinger's criticism has been so influential and develops points for which many others have criticized Gutiérrez's theology, his considerations occupy more of the chapter than the more recent and more limited criticisms made by the radical orthodoxy group.

4.1 Joseph Ratzinger

Joseph Ratzinger has evaluated Gutiérrez's theology unfavorably on numerous occasions. Cardinal Ratzinger has made these appraisals in his capacity as an accomplished theologian and also as the prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Although he was not the sole author of the documents from the Congregation, he did express his views through these official documents. For this reason, in order to know the new pope's views on the liberation theology of Gustavo Gutierrez, Ratzinger's personal statements and the official Vatican Instructions should be profitably read together.³⁴⁶

The pages that follow demonstrate that Ratzinger's negative assessments of Gutiérrez's theology stem directly from a misunderstanding of Gutiérrez's three dimensions of liberation and especially of the necessary mediating role the idea of utopia plays in relating faith and political action. Looking at the documents on liberation theology from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the reader will find that

Both McAfee Brown and McGovern identify the CDF positions with Ratzinger. See McAfee Brown, *Introduction to Liberation Theology*, 138-139, and McGovern, *Critics*, 16.

these pronouncements set forth the basic criticisms of liberation theology as well as supplying criteria for a valid theology of liberation. This dissertation argues that Gutiérrez's theology is not liable to the criticisms and does, in fact, meet the criteria for a positive assessment by church authorities. A look at Ratzinger's writing as an individual theologian, especially his detailed discussion of Gutiérrez's theology, clarifies that his misunderstanding of the notion of utopia in Gutiérrez's work is at the heart of these criticisms.

4.1.1 Documents from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith

From 1983 to 1986, the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) issued three documents especially pertinent to the discussion of Gutierrez's liberation theology. The first of these was a short document entitled "Ten Observations on the Theology of Gustavo Gutierrez" (March 1983). Within the space of a few years, the Vatican issued two Instructions concerning liberation. The first, *Libertatis Nuntius*, was issued on August 6, 1984, and is quite negative in its view of liberation theology. The second, *Libertatis Conscientia*, was a more positive Instruction issued on March 22, 1986. The first Instruction promised the second, and both Instructions, as the second indicates, are to be read "in the light of each other" as having an "organic relationship."

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The full text of the document can be found in Hennelly, *Documentary History*, 348-50.

The texts of both Instructions are found in full in Hennelly, *Documentary History*, 393-414 and 461-97, respectively.

LN, Introduction.

LC, Introduction, no. 2.

"Ten Observations," while not getting as much attention as the two later Vatican Instructions, is important because it specifically names Gutierrez and treats of his theology explicitly. The two later Vatican Instructions are important because they deal with liberation theology in general, and are addressed by the Congregation to the whole church.

4.1.1.1 "Ten Observations on the Theology of Gustavo Gutierrez" (March 1983)

There are three key themes that run through the ten observations made by the CDF. The first theme is that the CDF claims Gutierrez suffers from a Marxist bias/interpretation. The second is that the Congregation points out flaws in Gutierrez's methodology. The third is that the Congregation accuses Gutierrez of overemphasizing the human dimension to the detriment or even exclusion of the divine.

In observations 1, 2, 7, and 10, the CDF document clearly states that Gutierrez is Marxist. The document indicates that this Marxist turn stems from Gutierrez's well-intentioned concern for the poor of Latin America. It is precisely this concern that leads to his attempt to investigate the causes for their poverty, and thus leads to adopting a Marxist interpretation. However, the document makes it clear that any recourse to any aspect of Marxist thought inevitably leads to a wholesale acceptance of Marxist philosophy. In the document's own words, Marxism "is the determining principle from which he (Gutierrez) goes on to reinterpret the Christian message." One example the document gives is Gutierrez's view of history. The document claims that in Gutierrez's

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³⁵¹ 10 documents, number 2

theology, "God becomes history, (and) it is the human person who makes history through struggle and work."³⁵² This theme will resurface later on in *Libertatis Nuntius*.

The CDF also points out that Gutierrez's methodology as regards many aspects of his theology is flawed. For example, it claims that Gutierrez uses a faulty biblical hermeneutic. The bible is selectively re-read, and certain events are given special importance. More importantly, these events, like the Exodus, are given exclusively political interpretations. Another example the Congregation gives is Gutierrez's prioritizing orthopraxis over orthodoxy. The experience of God in the struggle for social justice is privileged as a means of receiving revelation, to the detriment of the teaching of the Church. This leads to an eventual denial of the normativity of divine revelation and the role of the Church hierarchy. This theme will also resurface later in *Libertatis* Nuntius.

Finally, the document maintains that Gutierrez reduces Christianity to the struggle for a better world; that Gutierrez is ultimately Pelagian. He reduces the growth of the Kingdom of God to simply the increase in justice. The only real sin in Gutierrez's system is social sin. Genuine fraternity is achieved only through the common struggle for justice, not grace, or the Church, or its sacramental system.

These three themes are interconnected throughout the ten observations. They all stem from Gutierrez's concern for the poor. This concern for the poor certainly leaves him predisposed to accepting a philosophy, such as Marxism, that attempts to explain "scientifically" the causes for poverty. This same concern for the poor leads Gutierrez to placing great emphasis on certain biblical texts, such as the Exodus, because these have a political flavor. And because Gutierrez is so concerned for the poor, he does tend to

³⁵² 10 documents number 7

emphasize what needs to be done by humans in history to reduce or eliminate oppression.

The emphasis on activism might certainly be understood as a denial of transcendence.

The CDF document is certainly well-intentioned. It rightly seeks to protect the Christian faith from any interpretation that would lead people astray. However, the document suffers from making key assumptions that are not supported in fact. Two such assumptions it makes are: 1) that by adopting certain portions of Marxist analysis, one ends up being inevitably and irreducibly Marxist, and 2) that a political interpretation is one that is mutually exclusive with divine activity and the recognition of such transcendence.

The CDF assumes that Gutierrez adopts the entirety of Marxist thought, including Marx's view of history. This understanding of history devolves to class struggle to the exclusion of divine activity. This is a strong claim, and if proven true, would certainly be damaging to Gutierrez's case. However, the document provides no textual evidence. On the other hand, previous chapters of this dissertation have shown that Gutierrez strongly maintains the absolute necessity of God's grace for the coming of the Kingdom. In fact, for Gutierrez, history centers around and climaxes in God's action in Jesus Christ. 353

The CDF also assumes that Gutierrez's selection of certain biblical texts and giving them a political interpretation means that he is denying transcendence. It is as though any reading which is political must be exclusively political, to the exclusion even of the religious dimension. Once again, previous chapters have demonstrated Gutierrez's continued insistence that the working for justice is always to be understood amidst the backdrop of the gratuitousness of the divine love. For example, while Gutierrez

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See, for example, Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 86-97.

describes Exodus as an event of political liberation for Israel, he proclaims this event precisely as a miracle of God's love. 354

In summary, while the CDF document raises well-intentioned criticisms of Gutierrez's theology, it bases these critiques on assumptions that are contradicted by Gutierrez's actual writings.

4.1.1.2 Libertatis Nuntius, 1984

This first Instruction does not specifically target Gutiérrez by name, referring instead to unspecified "theologians" and "theologies of liberation." That the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith intends these statements to apply to Gutiérrez is evidenced by the presence of these same criticisms of liberation theology in "Ten Observations on the Theology of Gustavo Gutiérrez" (March 1983). It must be noted that a number of commentators point out that the criticisms found in both of these documents are not valid as regards Gutiérrez's theology. Gutiérrez himself offers a defense of his work against these accusations in *The Truth Shall Make You Free*.

³⁵⁴ See, for example, Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, 86-90.

In his editorial introduction to the document, Hennelly also notes that a number of the criticisms made in this document are repeated in *Libertatis Nuntius*. As I present *Libertatis Nuntius*'s critiques of liberation theology, I shall refer to the corresponding points from "Ten Observations."

See, for instance, McGovern, *Critics*, 16; Robert McAfee Brown, "The Roman Curia and Liberation Theology: The Second (and Final?) Round," Christian Century 103 no. 19 (Jun 4/11), 552 as well as McAfee Brown, *Introduction to Liberation Theology*, 137-156; Robert Goizueta, "Liberation Theology: Retrospect and Prospect," Philosophy Theology vol. III, no. 1 Fall 1988, 36-37; and James Nickoloff, "Liberation Theology and the Church," Religious Studies Review, vol. 18, no. 1 January 1992, 8-9. Karl Rahner, in a letter written just two weeks before his death, proclaimed that "I am convinced of the orthodoxy of the theological work of Gustavo Gutiérrez. The liberation theology he represents is thoroughly orthodox and is aware of its limits within the whole context of Catholic theology." See Karl Rahner, "Letter to Cardinal Juan Landazuri Ricketts of Lima, Peru," (March 16, 1984) in Hennelly, *Documentary History*, 351. The editorial board of *Concilium*, which at the time included such noted theologians as David Tracy, Edward Schillebeeckx, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Hans Küng, issued a statement demonstrating similar support for Gutiérrez and other liberation theologians. "The theologians of *Concilium* wish to express our solidarity not only with their (liberation theologians) theological thought,

Libertatis Nuntius affirms, with a reference to Gaudium et Spes, that the aspiration for liberation "constitutes one of the principal signs of the times which the church has to examine and interpret in the light of the gospel." Libertatis Nuntius notes that this aspiration, while universal, is felt most deeply in contexts which are characterized by grave injustice and oppression, such as Latin America. The document warns that this aspiration for liberation requires clarification and guidance, however, because there are certain schools of thought which may "hide or pervert" this aspiration's meaning and dangerously propose goals for liberation that "are contrary to the true purpose of human life."

In this light, *Libertatis Nuntius* warns against "theologies of liberation" that propose a novel interpretation of the content of the faith and Christian existence, one which seriously departs from the faith of the church and in fact is a practical negation of the faith. *Libertatis Nuntius* identifies two specific sources of the problem: 1) concepts uncritically borrowed from Marxist ideology and 2) an overly political, non-theological biblical hermeneutic. As shown earlier, both of these errors are explicitly assigned to Gutiérrez in the "Ten Observations" document.

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but also with the concrete positions that they take." See Editorial Board of *Concilium*, "Statement of Solidarity with Liberation Theologians" (June 24, 1984) in Hennelly, *Documentary History*, 391. See also McAfee Brown, *Introduction to Liberation Theology*, 140.

Gustavo Gutiérrez, "The Truth Shall Make You Free," *The Truth Shall Make You Free,* trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Orbis Books: Maryknoll, NY, 1990).

LN, I, no. 1. See also GS no. 4.

³⁵⁹ LN, II, no. 3.

LN, VI, no. 9.

³⁶¹ LN, VI, no. 10.

Though ultimately critical of this use of Marxism, *Libertatis Nuntius* attempts to explain why these "theologies of liberation" turn to Marxist analysis. Given the dire situation of poverty and oppression in certain contexts, there is an impatience fueled by a strong desire for effective action. For action to be effective, the document acknowledges, one needs a scientific analysis of the structural causes of poverty. Marxism provides such a scientific analysis. 362 Yet *Libertatis Nuntius* identifies as the main problem with this approach that Marxism has such a global vision of reality that it is impossible to appropriate any one part (such as Marxist social analysis) without having to accept the entire ideology – "no separation of the parts of this epistemologically unique complex is possible." The use of the notion of "class struggle," for instance, cannot be separated from the interpretation which Marx gave it. Because "atheism and the denial of the human person, liberty, and rights are at the core of Marxist theory,"364 the use even of a part of Marxism risks implicitly contradicting central truths of the faith. Marxism is seen by Libertatis Nuntius as having such an all-embracing conception that "theologies of liberation" which borrow this "ideological core" end up having this core acting as a "determining principle," repeating a criticism explicitly aimed at Gutiérrez in the "Ten Observations."365

Libertatis Nuntius goes on to label these "theologies of liberation" as systems which are "perversions of the Christian message as God entrusted it to the church." It

⁶² LN, VII, no. 2.

LN, VII, no. 6.

LN, VII, no. 9.

LN, VIII, no. 1. See CDF, "Ten Observations," nos. 1-2.

³⁶⁶ LN, IX, no. 1.

notes that liberation theologies rely not on the idea of social stratification with its attendant inequities, but rather on the notion of "class struggle," which Marxism sees as the fundamental law of history. Hence, these theologies hold that "class struggle" is the driving force of history. Within this horizon, they affirm that there is only one history, with no distinction made between salvation history and profane history in order to avoid dualism. **State Libertatis Nuntius* concludes that such thinking leads to a denial of God's transcendence and action in history. Furthermore, this line of reasoning has a tendency to identify the Kingdom of God with human liberation. It also makes history the subject of its own development as humankind's self-redemption via "class struggle," criticisms lodged specifically against Gutiérrez in "Ten Observations." **Libertatis Nuntius* further says that such thinking on the part of these theologies inevitably leads to a radical politicization of the affirmations of the faith, subordinating these faith affirmations and theology itself to purely political criteria. **Ton.**

Libertatis Nuntius pinpoints two further serious problems which arise from the alleged use of the idea of "class struggle" as a determining principle by these theologies. First, the document charges that charity itself is understood in terms of the "class struggle." This outlook results in an exclusion from God's love of those who are not poor. Love cannot be seen as universal because the rich belong precisely to the class that

³⁶⁷ LN, IX, nos. 2 -3.

See CDF, "Ten Observations," no. 7.

LN, IX, no. 3. See CDF, "Ten Observations," no. 5. See also the discussion of Ratzinger's argument in section 4.1.2 below.

LN, IX, no. 6. See CDF, "Ten Observations," nos. 3-4.

must be fought.³⁷¹ Second, when these theologies talk about the "church of the poor," the poor are understood as the proletariat of Marx, again within the ideological perspective of the "class struggle." Thus, even when these theologies talk about the church as the people of God, the term "people" is applied in terms of the class struggle.³⁷² *Libertatis Nuntius* maintains that the reliance on the notion of class struggle is tantamount to a challenge to the sacramental and hierarchical structures of the church. It holds that liberation theologies denounce the church hierarchy as representatives of the ruling class and therefore supportive of the oppression of the poor.³⁷³

Both *Libertatis Nuntius* and "Ten Observations" claim that, owing to their "classist" understanding, these liberation theologies discredit *a priori* the hierarchy and the Roman magisterium because they belong to the class of the oppressors.³⁷⁴ The magisterium's teachings reflect class interests. *Libertatis Nuntius* is very clear that: "Here is where the global and all-embracing character of the theology of liberation appears. As a result, it must be criticized not just on the basis of this or that affirmation, but on the basis of its classist viewpoint, which it has adopted a priori and which has come to function in it as a determining principle."³⁷⁵

Libertatis Nuntius claims that criticizing individual points will not be fruitful since the classist viewpoint precludes the possibility of any real dialogue with these theologians of liberation. Dialogue is impossible because these theologians believe that

LN, IX, nos. 10-12.

LN, IX, no. 7.

LN, IX, no. 13. See CDF, "Ten Observations," nos. 7-8.

LN, X, no. 1. See CDF, "Ten Observations," no. 8.

³⁷⁵ LN, X, no. 2.

their own point of view, the view of the oppressed and revolutionary class, is the only true point of view.³⁷⁶ Criteria for truth in theology are now relativized in view of the "class struggle." Thus, orthodoxy is substituted by orthopraxis, understood as right revolutionary praxis.³⁷⁷

While *Libertatis Nuntius* charges that one source of the problems in liberation theologies is its use of Marxist analysis, it also maintains that a second source of difficulties is a new hermeneutic in which the reading of scripture is essentially political and non-theological. Exodus, for instance, is read as an exclusively political event. *Libertatis Nuntius* puts it unambiguously: "the mistake here is not in bringing attention to a political dimension of the readings of scripture, but in making of this one dimension the *principal or exclusive component* (emphasis added)." "Ten Observations" assigns this mistake specifically to Gutiérrez's work. ** *Libertatis Nuntius* makes the further point that this classist view allows for "the most radical theses of rational exegesis," namely the emphasis on the historical Jesus rather than the "Jesus of faith." This reductionist exegesis leads to an understanding that the revolutionary experience of the poor (which was Jesus' experience) is the exclusive revealer of true knowledge concerning God and the Kingdom. *Libertatis Nuntius* argues that these theologies give an exclusively political interpretation to "the whole of the Christian mystery." **

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LN, X, no. 3. See CDF, "Ten Observations," nos. 7-8.

³⁷⁷ LN, X, no. 3.

LN, X, no. 5. See CDF, "Ten Observations," nos. 3-4.

LN, X, no. 8.

LN, X, nos. 10 and 13.

The last section of *Libertatis Nuntius* points out that the church is called to respond to the demands of justice. However, this response must be one which is based upon truth, unlike the supposed "perversion" of the "theologies of liberation." In doing so, *Libertatis Nuntius* anticipates the next Vatican Instruction, *Libertatis Conscientia*, by providing an outline of what a genuine theology of liberation should be. *Libertatis Nuntius* states that the need for structural reforms should not blind people to the fact that the source of injustice is in the human heart. Therefore, in order to bring about social change that is truly in service of humankind, there is need for constant conversion. "For it will only be in the measure that they collaborate freely in these necessary changes through their own initiative and in solidarity that people, awakened to a sense of their responsibility, will grow in humanity." *Libertatis Nuntius* reiterates that it is not new structures that will give birth to this "new person." It is only the Holy Spirit, freely given by God, who is the source of all genuine renewal.

Discussing *Libertatis Nuntius* leads one to ask whether its criticisms apply to Gutierrez's liberation theology. The first criticism concerns Marxist analysis. Gutiérrez responds in an article he wrote in 1984 entitled "Theology and the Social Sciences." Gutiérrez says that once poverty enters one's theological reflection, social analysis becomes important, as *Libertatis Nuntius* acknowledges. Gutiérrez agrees that elements of Marxism play a part in contemporary social sciences. He argues, however, that the use

³⁸¹ LN, XI, no. 8.

³⁸² LN, XI, no. 8.

Gutiérrez, "Theology and the Social Sciences," *The Truth Shall Make You Free*, 58-83.

of these social sciences does not constitute an identification with Marxist analysis. 384 He gives the Theory of Dependency as an example. This theory is an important tool for Latin American social analysis, and it is used by theoreticians who are not Marxist. For example, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, according to Gutiérrez the most important representative of the theory of dependency, is said by a Marxist to be of a "theoretical posture that is worlds removed from that of Marx." Furthermore, Gutiérrez argues that there are Marxists who criticize the theory. The point Gutiérrez makes is that "neither the social sciences generally nor the Latin American contribution to them can be reduced to the Marxist version." Furthermore, Gutiérrez argues that simply referring to Marx or other Marxists does not mean an acceptance of Marxism in its entirety, especially not an acceptance of its atheistic ideology and totalitarian vision; this point is confirmed by a careful reading of *A Theology of Liberation*, which shows no traces of such atheism or totalitarianism. Gutiérrez concludes that in his theology, there is a meeting between theology and the social sciences, not between theology and Marxist analysis, as such. 387

How has Gutierrez responded to the accusation that his liberation theology relies on the notion of class struggle as "the driving force of history?" Gutiérrez reminds us that he used the term to refer to factual situations. There is indeed a conflict between economic classes in Latin America. But as Gutierrez points out, he never understood the

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Gutiérrez, "Theology and the Social Sciences," 60. Gutiérrez also cites in support of his position a letter written by Pedro Arrupe, S.J. on the topic of Marxist analysis. The full text of this letter can be found in Hennelly, *Documentary History*, 307-13.

Gutiérrez, "Theology and the Social Sciences," 61. Here Gutiérrez is citing Agustin Cueva, "El uso del concepto de modo de produccion en America Latina: algunos problemas teoricos" in *Modos de produccion en America Latina* (Lima, 1976), 24.

Gutiérrez, "Theology and the Social Sciences," 61.

Gutiérrez, "Theology and the Social Sciences," 64.

term as a suprahistorical principle, as *Libertatis Nuntius's* formulations do. In *The Truth* Shall Make You Free, Gutierrez writes, "I am far from thinking of social conflict in that way."³⁸⁸ McAfee Brown points out that when Gutiérrez talks about class struggle, the task is not to "eliminate the foe," but rather to get rid of the social stratification that makes the struggle necessary. 389 In describing the preferential option for the poor, for example, Gutiérrez affirms the necessity of universality.

The very word "preference" denies all exclusiveness and seeks rather to call attention to those who are the first – though not the only ones – with whom we should be in solidarity. In the interests of truth and personal honesty I want to say that from the very beginning of liberation theology, as many of my writings show, I insisted that the great challenge was to maintain both the universality of God's love and God's predilection for those on the lowest rung of the ladder in history.³⁹⁰

On the charge of "historical immanentism," Gutiérrez reminds us that his three dimensions of liberation were inspired by Pope Paul VI's *Populorum Progressio*, especially by its understanding of "integral development" (no. 21). Within God's liberating intervention, humanity has a crucial role in creating a transition from "less human conditions" to "more human conditions (using the terms of *Populorum Progressio*)." In line with his understanding of Paul VI, Gutierrez asserts the absolute necessity of God's intervention in order for humanity to be liberated. Such a liberation necessarily includes moving from less human to more human conditions. Gutiérrez

³⁸⁸ Gutiérrez, "The Truth Shall Make You Free," The Truth Shall Make You Free, 131.

³⁸⁹ McAfee Brown, "The Roman Curia," 553.

Gustavo Gutiérrez, Teologia de la liberacion: perspectivas (Lima, Peru: Centro de Estudios y Publicaciones, 1971) [xxv-xxvi]. There are two editions of the English translation of this work: A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation, ed. and trans. Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1973) and A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation, rev. ed. with a new introduction by the author, ed. and trans. Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988). Unless otherwise noted, quotations are from the 1988 revised edition. Whenever possible, citations will be given in square brackets to the revised edition, the first English translation, and the first Spanish edition, respectively.

stresses that: "there is no slightest tinge of immanentism in this approach to integral liberation. But if any expression I have used may have given the impression that there is, I want to say here as forcefully as I can that any interpretation along those lines is incompatible with my position." 391

Related to this is the criticism that Gutierrez has reduced the meaning of the Kingdom of God to human liberation. This criticism seemingly disregards a statement by Gutierrez in *A Theology of Liberation*:

Not only is the growth of the Kingdom not reduced to temporal progress; because of the Word accepted in faith, we see that the fundamental obstacle to the Kingdom, which is sin, is also the root of all misery and injustice; we see that the very meaning of the growth of the Kingdom is also the ultimate precondition for a just society and a new humanity. 392

There is no question of Gutiérrez advocating humanity's "self-redemption." This discussion of the three dimensions of liberation has shown that Gutiérrez insists on the gratuity of God's love and God's forgiving grace as the *sine qua non* of humankind's liberation from sin. This statement by Gutierrez stands at odds with the allegation that he advocates that humanity redeems itself. According to Gutierrez, genuine liberation ultimately comes from God, and it comes in history, as well as beyond it. In response to God's grace, people must work to move from "less human conditions" to "more human conditions." The key point is that for Gutiérrez, liberation is not just about improving our historical situation, with no reference to God's saving action. However, liberation is not just about God's grace, with no reference to the need to work for the improvement of our historical situation.

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Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [103, 176, 228]

Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, p. xxxix.

As we have seen, *Libertatis Nuntius* also has criticisms regarding the biblical hermeneutic used by liberation theologians. These criticisms are, however, misplaced. First, Gutiérrez does not advocate that orthopraxis be a substitute for orthodoxy. Orthopraxis, that is, correct living of the Christian life, and orthodoxy, that is, correct belief, should go hand-in-hand. As he says in A Theology of Liberation, correct practice does not deny the meaning or importance of correct teaching. Rather, Gutierrez emphasizes the importance of praxis in the Christian life, but without opposing orthodoxy. 393 In his view, orthodoxy and orthopraxis should be complementary and mutually enriching. Second, Gutierrez does not reduce theology and the faith's affirmations to simply political considerations. Recall Gutiérrez's definition of theology in A Theology of Liberation as critical reflection on praxis in light of God's Word. 394 Gutiérrez stresses the primacy of the Word for any genuine theology. He says that it is "fidelity to this norm" by which any understanding of the faith should be assessed. 395 Finally, there stands *Libertatis Nuntius*'s criticism that the new hermeneutic functions in a vacuum because liberation theology excludes the church's teachings and tradition in favor of orthopraxis. Yet Gutiérrez emphasizes that "the criterion used in discernment comes from a faith that is lived and shared in the communion of the church." ³⁹⁶ Theology is a critical reflection on praxis, understood as the way people live their life and practice their spirituality in commitment and prayer as members of the Christian

See Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [8, 10, 26-27].

³⁹⁴ See Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, [10-12, 12-15, 30-34].

See Gutiérrez, "The Truth Shall Make You Free," 94.

Gutiérrez, "The Truth Shall Make You Free," 102.

community committed to the word of God.³⁹⁷ For Gutiérrez, this definition of theology as reflection on praxis in light of God's Word does not exclude the magisterial authority of the church.

In sum, a deeper analysis of *Libertatis Nuntius* shows that many of its concerns about problematic liberation theologies do not apply to Gutierrez's version. Viewed through a nuanced understanding of the three dimensions of the single process of liberation, Gutiérrez's theology mostly conforms with the vision of *Libertatis Nuntius*.

4.1.1.3 Libertatis Conscientia (1986)

The next document from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Libertatis Conscientia*, further expands upon the vision of an authentic theology of liberation laid out by its predecessor. This section provides a description of the document followed by an examination of specific passages to show how *Libertatis Conscientia's* understanding of liberation is precisely that which Gutiérrez proposes.

The first chapter of *Libertatis Conscientia* reiterates that human aspirations for freedom are widespread. It also points out that humanity has made significant steps in achieving greater freedom. Through science and technology, there is a greater mastery of nature. There has also been significant improvement as regards human rights, at least in most societies. Again, the words of *Libertatis Nuntius* acknowledge the aspiration for human liberation.

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See Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, xxx-xxxiii and [5-12, 6-15, 20-34].

³⁹⁸ See LC, nos. 5-24.

Chapter Two expounds upon this idea by talking about "the human vocation to freedom and the tragedy of sin." In this section, *Libertatis Conscientia* defines freedom, not as license, but as the ability to do the good within a community. Freedom is a capacity that is always understood in reference to others and can only truly flourish within a just social order. Furthermore, since humans are embodied, they need the resources of the material world for their personal and social fulfillment. Hence, the vocation to freedom includes "dominion over the earth by putting it at (humanity's) service through work." *Libertatis Conscientia* reminds people though that despite their God-given freedom, humanity has always tended to deny this vocation to do the good by sinning.

Chapter Three points out that humankind's sinful history would lead to despair had God abandoned us to ourselves. But God did not abandon us. The document then provides a brief summary of salvation history, from the Old Testament to the New Testament, and proceeds to a discussion of the church as the people of God of the new covenant. Thus, *Libertatis Conscientia* elaborates on *Libertatis Nuntius's* insistence on the church and on the primacy of grace in overcoming sin.

Chapters Four and Five are concerned with the liberating mission and social doctrine of the church. Chapter Four addresses the integral salvation of the world and the love of preference for the poor. Chapter Five discusses the social doctrine of the church and its role in a Christian practice of liberation. A closer look at these last two chapters in their discussion of the church, its mission, and its social doctrine will show that

³⁹⁹ LC, nos. 25-42.

LC, no. 34.

see LC, nos. 43-60.

Libertatis Conscientia actually confirms Gutiérrez's theology of liberation, particularly if readers grasp Gutiérrez's account of the three dimensions of liberation and the central role the notion of utopia plays as bridge between faith and political action.

First of all, *Libertatis Conscientia* stresses the importance of making a careful distinction between earthly progress and the growth of the Kingdom. It also emphasizes that there should be no separation. 402 This distinction without separation is reiterated when Libertatis Conscientia discusses the Beatitudes, which "enable us to situate the temporal order in relation to a transcendent order which gives the temporal order its true measure but without taking away its true nature." Libertatis Conscientia then defines the essential mission of the church as one of evangelization and salvation. 404 The church draws its zeal from the divine love. This same love, which impels the church in her evangelizing mission to all persons, "also causes it, through the effective action of its members, to pursue the true temporal good, help them in their needs, provide for their education, and promote an *integral liberation* from everything that hinders the development of individuals (emphasis added).",405 Thus, Libertatis Conscientia argues that the promotion of justice is part of the church's mission. But *Libertatis Conscientia* warns that this mission should not be reduced merely to a preoccupation with the temporal order. 406

LC, no. 60.

LC, no. 62.

LC, no. 63.

LC, no. 63.

LC, no. 64.

The following passage clarifies how *Libertatis Conscientia* understands the relation between the Kingdom of God and its growth in history:

Hope is the certain expectation 'of new heavens and of a new earth where justice will dwell' (2 Pet. 3:13)... This hope does not weaken commitment to the progress of the earthly city, but rather gives it meaning and strength. It is of course important to make a careful distinction between earthly progress and the growth of the kingdom, which do not belong to the same order. Nonetheless, this distinction is not a separation; for the human vocation to eternal life does not suppress but confirms the task of using the energies and means received from the creator for developing temporal life. 407

Libertatis Conscientia's concern for not reducing the Kingdom's growth to mere earthly progress is precisely the point Gutiérrez addresses through the notion of utopia. Gutiérrez is concerned with the relation between faith and political action, or alternatively, the relation between the Kingdom of God and the building up of the world, and this relation requires a distinction without separation. ⁴⁰⁸ As previously shown, it is the notion of utopia which allows Gutiérrez to relate meaningfully both poles in the equation without separating them, or collapsing one into the other.

In discussing the social doctrine of the church, *Libertatis Conscientia* further notes that this teaching "develops in accordance with the changing circumstances of history."⁴⁰⁹ Thus it calls for -- along with certain permanently valid principles such as solidarity -- "contingent judgments" which are constantly open to new questions and situations that may arise. 410 This social teaching also emphasizes the dignity of the

408 Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [29, 45, 64].

410 LC, no. 72.

⁴⁰⁷ LC, nos. 58-60.

⁴⁰⁹ LC, no. 72.

human person as created in God's image, and thus, the goal is persons who "are the active and responsible subjects of social life." 411

Libertatis Conscientia actually appears to describe Gutiérrez's notion of utopia here. Gutierrez understands utopia as humankind's provisional vision of a better humanity, constantly guided by the permanent values of the Kingdom, yet always open to revision as circumstances and situations change. Utopia's goal is the creation of a new humanity in solidarity where people are the artisans of their own destiny.

Libertatis Conscientia also says that the social doctrine of the church does not propose any particular system (economic, social, or political), but in light of fundamental principles, it makes contingent judgments that make "it possible at once to see to what extent existing systems conform or do not conform to the demands of human dignity." This is precisely the role that the notion of utopia plays in Gutiérrez's theology. Because of its mediating function, utopia guards against the identification of the permanent principles of Christian faith with any one particular system or option. However, the utopian vision is always guided by the principles of the gospel and the values of the Kingdom. Therefore, utopia enables people to announce that which contingently conforms to the better humanity they envision, and enables them to denounce that which does not so conform.

In fact, *Libertatis Conscientia*'s description of what liberation theology should be strikingly mirrors Gutiérrez's three dimensions of liberation.

It is therefore necessary to work simultaneously for the conversion of hearts and for the improvement of structures. For the sin which is at the root of unjust situations is, in a true and immediate sense, a voluntary act which has its source in

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LC, no. 73.

LC, no. 74.

the freedom of individuals.... The fight against injustice is meaningless unless it is waged with a view to establishing a new social and political order in conformity with the demands of justice. 413

Here, what *Libertatis Conscientia* describes as the fight against injustice and the need to improve structures corresponds to Gutierrez's first dimension: political and economic liberation. *Libertatis Conscientia*'s recognition that sin is the root of all injustice calls to mind Gutierrez's third dimension: liberation from sin. Finally, *Libertatis Conscientia*'s contention that the struggle against injustice is meaningless without the creation of a new socio-political order parallels Gutierrez's second dimension: utopia.

Finally, *Libertatis Conscientia* talks about the dangers of ideology and the need to combat it. It says that people cannot passively accept, much less actively support, "groups which by force or by manipulation of public opinion take over the state apparatus and unjustly impose on the collectivity an imported ideology contrary to the culture of the people." It adds later that culture is often debased by ideology, and that education is turned into an instrument which serves political and economic power. 415

For Gutiérrez, the notion of a just and humane society is the antithesis of ideology, understood as a public opinion manipulated in order to serve political and economic power. Ideology seeks to keep the poor in their oppression by leading them to think that it is their destiny to be poor. Utopia, on the other hand, envisions a new social order, where no one is poor. The notion of an equitable society is fundamentally related to historical reality, a reality which ideology seeks to mask. Furthermore,

LC, nos. 75 and 78.

LC, no. 75. For another perspective on the effect of an imported ideology, see Juan Luis Segundo, *Teologia de la Liberacion: respuesta al Cardenal Ratzinger* (Madrid: Ediciones Cristianidad, 1985).

LC, no. 93.

See Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, [136-137, 234-235, 299-301].

Gutiérrez emphasizes the need for conscientization (education) as that which will enable people to break free from the grip of ideology and realize that they are called to be artisans of their own destiny.

Libertatis Conscientia, in detailing what a true Christian theology of liberation should be like, actually confirms Gutiérrez's theology of liberation. Central to this argument were Gutiérrez's three dimensions of liberation and the important role the notion of utopia plays in this understanding. Without using the same words, Libertatis Conscientia is essentially echoing Gutiérrez.

4.1.2. Ratzinger as an Individual Theologian

The Instructions from the Congregation on the Doctrine of the Faith not only do not succeed as critiques of Gutiérrez's theology, they actually confirm it, given a proper understanding of the three dimensions of liberation and the role the notion of utopia plays. Why does the then Cardinal Ratzinger criticize Gutiérrez then? An argument can be made that he misunderstands Gutiérrez's use of utopia and the role it plays within the three dimensions of liberation. An examination of an article he wrote as a theologian in 1986, "Politik und Erlosung: Zum Verhaltnis von Glaube Rationalitat und Irrationalem in der sogennantent Theologie der Befreiung", supports this.

In this article, Ratzinger grants that it is very difficult to speak of redemption amidst a situation of dire poverty and hunger, such as in Latin America. He also acknowledges that such an obvious lack of redemption is both a social and an economic phenomenon, and that these socio-economic realities are dependent upon politics. If

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Joseph Ratzinger, "Politik und Erlosung: Zum Verhaltnis von Glaube, Rationalitat und Irrationalem in der sogennantent Theologie der Befreiung" (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1986). I am using an unpublished translation by Matthew Ashley.

theology, then, is to speak of redemption in situations of oppression, it must become political in order to become adequate to its subject matter. Ratzinger sees this logic of liberation theology as unavoidable, and he concludes that it is a valid starting point for this theology. What he questions, however, is not the starting point, but rather liberation theology's proposed solution to the problem. In particular, Ratzinger focuses on the work of Gustavo Gutiérrez, specifically in *A Theology of Liberation*. Ratzinger states that Gutiérrez's thought converges on "the fusion of political and theological reason, of political action and hope for the Kingdom of God." It is precisely this attempt by Gutiérrez at relating faith and political action through the notion of utopia that Ratzinger criticizes as faulty and/or inadequate.

Ratzinger begins his critique by noting that since Vatican II, the decisive approach in all of Catholic theology is one that seeks to overcome dualism in theology. He notes that since the end of the Patristic period, theology had made a distinction between the natural and supernatural orders – such a distinction roughly corresponding with the distinction between the church and the world. He then notes how this distinction between the natural and the supernatural came to be viewed negatively in the twentieth century. Pure nature does not exist – it is an entirely theoretical concept. Supernature is also seen as problematic, for God did not create a second story to Being but rather enters into a relationship with humanity in its history. Thus, salvation is viewed as not being "regional or partial," but rather God's graced actions are always already present at the fundamental level of human existence. Given this understanding, it can be said that there is no longer any real distinction between the church and the world. God's temple in the

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Ratzinger, "Politik und Erlosung," 6.

Ratzinger, "Politik und Erlosung," 7.

world is history, and "the encounter with God happens through one's engagement in the historical becoming of humanity." Ratzinger notes that Gutiérrez endorses this view.

Thus, in Ratzinger's reading of Gutiérrez, since God and love are identified in the bible, true love must be political, i.e. leading to a radical restructuring of society from the bottom up. In other words, the political dimension is not added to the gospel from the outside, but rather comes from its very center. Ratzinger summarizes Gutiérrez's position that history is anthropophany; i.e. "the situation of contemporary persons is defined by the model of tomorrow's persons – by the certainty that human beings will overcome this age and enter into a new era, into a world which they themselves have created."

Ratzinger correctly points out that Gutiérrez never completely allows the Kingdom of God to be absorbed by the new society. He acknowledges that Gutiérrez always understands redemption as more than simply a political process. However, he does note that Gutiérrez says that the Kingdom will never grow without historical initiatives. Political praxis is an integral part of the doctrine of redemption for Gutiérrez. Thus, Ratzinger concludes, while theology and politics are not totally on the same level, both coincide in a considerable core region. It is precisely Gutierrez's theological relating of faith and political action that Ratzinger finds problematic.

Ratzinger correctly points out the importance to Gutiérrez's theology of distinguishing three levels or dimensions of liberation. Ratzinger accurately summarizes Gutiérrez here, including the understanding that while liberation for Gutiérrez does

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Ratzinger, "Politik und Erlosung," 8.

Ratzinger, "Politik und Erlosung," 8.

indeed have three dimensions, liberation itself is always to be thought of as a single process. For Ratzinger, here lies the key to Gutiérrez's argumentation. For Ratzinger, the very logic of Gutiérrez's position rises and falls upon this unity in distinction and distinction in unity within the concept of liberation.

Ratzinger looks at each of the three dimensions in turn. He begins by investigating the third dimension, that which corresponds to faith. For Ratzinger, this dimension has no real function in Gutiérrez's system. If communion with other persons is already taken up in the notion of utopia (second dimension), then faith and the forgiveness of sins adds nothing. Since love has become political, "ethical criteria have shifted over into criteria of political efficacy." If utopia talks about the creation of a new society in solidarity, it is thinking along the lines of restructuring society on the level of ownership of the means of production. Thus the forgiveness of sins adds nothing, according to Ratzinger. He concludes that in Gutiérrez's system, "theology, in those assertions which are proper to it, is without consequence, and hence becomes superfluous."

As regards the first dimension, that of social and political liberation, Ratzinger asserts that Gutiérrez's analysis replaces economics with sociology viewed entirely from the optic of utopia. Without making any citations or further argumentation, Ratzinger concludes that the first level of liberation is completely absorbed by the second level – the realm of utopia. 425

Ratzinger seems to think of Gutiérrez's three dimensions of liberation as separable (grade school, high school, college).

Ratzinger, "Politik und Erlosung," 10.

Ratzinger, "Politik und Erlosung," 10.

Ratzinger, "Politik und Erlosung," 10-11.

Having thus argued that both the first and third dimensions of liberation are effectively absorbed into the second level, that of utopia, Ratzinger argues that it is this second dimension which serves to legitimize Gutiérrez's entire project. Ratzinger quotes Gutiérrez: "the historical project or the utopia of liberation... is the authentic place of the cultural revolution, that is, of the continual creation of the new humanity... For this reason the model of the new humanity marks the place at which political liberation and community of all persons with God meet." For Ratzinger, this is Gutiérrez's central thesis. He is quick to describe, though, what he calls Gutiérrez's orthodox proviso. Ratzinger acknowledges that Gutiérrez clearly states that the Gospel does not provide us with utopia. Utopia is a human work. The Gospel is undeserved grace from God. Despite what he calls this orthodox proviso, and despite claiming to believe in Gutiérrez's own seriousness and sincerity, Ratzinger argues that this proviso is functionally empty in Gutiérrez's system because all scientific rationality (first dimension) and faith (third dimension) are effectively subsumed within utopia.

For Ratzinger then, all of this boils down to one question: "who or what justifies utopia?" For him, it is not enough that Gutiérrez distinguishes between utopia and ideology or political dogmatism. The understanding that utopia, for Gutiérrez, must always be subject to revision by praxis is not sufficient either. For Ratzinger, these are simply negative delimitations that are not sufficient, lacking any clear positive affirmation. Since utopia is presented as the creation of a new humanity in a new society

Ratzinger, Politik und Erlosung," 11, quoting the German edition of Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 232.

Ratzinger, "Politik und Erlosung," 11.

where both "consciousness and production grow daily," Ratzinger argues that Gutiérrez's notion of utopia may stem from an understanding that having more equals being more. As such, Ratzinger considers Gutiérrez as still being in the realm of the evolutionary model "in which consumerism is supposed to lead to increased being." Leaving this particular question aside, however, Ratzinger goes on to conclude, rather surprisingly, that "history is the real divinity of utopia, which has not only drawn to itself the attributes and power of divinity, but also its unconditional claim to worship and obedience, as well as the unconditional character of its promises."

Perhaps in order to justify the abruptness with which he arrives at this conclusion, Ratzinger points out that Gutiérrez's understanding of utopia is clearly influenced by Marx, although he gives no citations in support. In addition, he turns to the work of Saint Simon (1760-1825), whose work, he points out, coincides with the formation of the world of Latin American nations. Ratzinger points out that Saint Simon believed in the possibility of deciphering the determining laws of all order in the universe including those that govern social organization. Saint Simon understood society as an organic machine. Ratzinger acknowledges, though, that he is unaware whether Gutiérrez has read Saint Simon or not.

Ratzinger summarizes his analysis of Gutiérrez's thought by indicating that while Gutiérrez's personal orthodoxy is guaranteed by his salvific proviso, the orthodoxy is empty because the theological system itself is irrational, based as it is upon

Ratzinger, "Politik und Erlosung," 11, quoting Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 230-231.

Ratzinger, "Politik und Erlosung," 12.

Ratzinger, "Politik und Erlosung," 12.

Ratzinger, "Politik und Erlosung," 12.

"philosophical irrationality." For Ratzinger, Gutiérrez's theological error lies in his systematic integration of political-social problems with the doctrine of redemption.

Ratzinger claims that Gutiérrez grasps redemption as an ontology of hope, of the not-yet. He then adds that we could also speak of a metaphysics of the not-yet, which could lead to a physics of the not-yet, based upon Saint Simon's thought. For Ratzinger, this is a logical necessity. For him, whenever redemption appears connected with politics, understanding metaphysics as physics is unavoidable. Ratzinger writes:

For redemption is what faith promises with certainty; it is on the level of being. If the concreteness of redemption is supposed to occur in the political realm, then being must become possible, then human realities must attain a necessity which can be fixed and interpreted; then metaphysics has to be interchangeable with the physics of human affairs. Then one unavoidably resorts to intellectual systems which believe themselves to have a physics of the human. To this extent the integration of political-social problems into the doctrine of redemption inherently calls forth Saint Simon's system or a theologized Marxism. There is an inner affinity between systems which comes from an affinity of origin and is unavoidable.

For Ratzinger, Gutiérrez, in seeking to speak about redemption amidst a situation that is in dire need of radical political reform, *reduces* redemption to political reform. Because redemption is on the level of being and is assured by faith, reducing redemption to politics means understanding politics as also on the level of being. Politics and its inevitable progress to perfection are then understood as guaranteed by faith. We are left unavoidably with Saint Simon's system or Marxism.

Ratzinger is correct that Gutiérrez's three dimensions of liberation are central to Gutiérrez's entire system. Furthermore, the notion of utopia is central to the three

Ratzinger, "Politik und Erlosung," 14.

Ratzinger, "Politik und Erlosung," 13.

dimensions, as that which allows for the fruitful and appropriate relation of the other two dimensions – political liberation and liberation from sin.

However, Ratzinger's understanding of Gutiérrez's notion of utopia is flawed, and it is upon this understanding that his whole critique rests. Ratzinger's contention that utopia treats history as divinity is not consistent with Gutiérrez's position. Gutiérrez constantly says that the goal of history lies beyond history – that the fullness of the Kingdom of God cannot be attained within history. Furthermore, as previously shown, Gutiérrez understands history precisely as the story of humanity's ever-increasing freedom. In fact, Gutiérrez understands the notion of a more just and humane society to be on the level of the creation of a new humanity *in freedom* in a new society characterized by solidarity. Not only is Ratzinger's conclusion about Gutiérrez's understanding of utopia and history absent from Gutiérrez's own writings, but Gutiérrez holds the opposite position.

Looking at why Gutiérrez posits the three dimensions of liberation provides a better understanding of exactly why Ratzinger misunderstands Gutiérrez's use of utopia. For Gutiérrez, faith and political action cannot be identified or collapsed into each other. To do so would mean, for example, that a Christian must vote for a particular candidate or choose a particular political option as her/his Christian duty. Would this not be a denial of freedom then, assuming the normal situation where no one candidate is clearly evil nor the other clearly good? To do so would mean that there is only one correct and Christian way to approach agrarian reform or affirmative action. This understanding is what Ratzinger means when he talks about the determinism of the

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Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, xxx.

Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, [137-139, 236-238, 302-305].

machine, and is exactly the position Gutiérrez is trying to avoid by using the notion of utopia as a bridge between faith and political action. On the other hand, one cannot say that faith and political action have nothing to say to each other, especially in a context of such massive oppression as Latin America. On the contrary, Christian faith has many things to say about the political order, which itself in turn asks many questions of the faith.

The need to relate faith and political action without merging them into an undifferentiated unity is precisely why Gutiérrez posits the use of the notion of utopia in his theology. This does not result, however, in faith and political action becoming subsumed into utopia, as Ratzinger claims. Gutiérrez clearly states that in order to be truly liberated, people must be freed *from* unjust and oppressive structures -- the first dimension of liberation. They must be allowed to reach *for* the creation of a new humanity in a new society characterized by freedom and solidarity -- the second dimension of liberation. ⁴³⁶ Thus, the first dimension of liberation is distinct from the second dimension. It must be reiterated, however, that Gutiérrez understands liberation as one single, complex process with three interdependent and inseparable dimensions. ⁴³⁷ Gutiérrez has said that he prefers to use the word "dimension" instead of the word "level" because dimension connotes inseparability (for example, an object in the three-dimensional world always has length, width and height, inseparably). ⁴³⁸

⁴³⁶ Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, [137, 235, 301-302].

⁴³⁷ Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, [137, 235, 301-302].

Gustavo Gutiérrez, interview by author, digital recording, Notre Dame, Indiana, 13 December 2004.

In order to show that the third dimension, that of faith and the forgiveness of sins, is not functionally empty as Ratzinger claims, one must look at what Gutiérrez considers to be the cause of all injustice, sin – original, social, and personal. To conclude that sin is the root of all oppression is the result of a biblical conviction on Gutiérrez's part. 439 No social analysis can make the same conclusion, and, since sin is at the root of all oppression, no utopia in itself can serve to solve the problem. Any radical restructuring of society that would eliminate oppression and result in genuine communion necessitates God's grace and forgiveness. 440 The third dimension of liberation is not added onto Gutiérrez's system as an afterthought or merely as an attempt at guaranteeing his personal orthodoxy. Rather, there can be no genuine integral liberation without this dimension. Hence, Gutiérrez always speaks of these three dimensions as a single process. It is on the level of utopia, the creation of the new humanity, that the dimension of economic and political liberation meets with faith and forgiveness of sins, but the three remain distinct dimensions of a single process of integral liberation. Utopia does not subsume the other two dimensions.

Finally, Cardinal Ratzinger contends that any attempt at trying to concretize redemption within the political sphere necessarily entails a deterministic view of history. Gutiérrez's understanding of hope – the making present of the not-yet – comes not from a faith in history understood as God. Rather, it comes from a steadfast faith in a God who out of love chooses to work in history. The hope of utopia comes not from a confidence in an organic society understood in an "evolutionary" way. Rather, it comes

⁴³⁹ Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [24-25, 35-37, 58-60].

Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [25, 37, 60].

See Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, [123-126, 215-220, 265-274].

from the unshakeable conviction that the Kingdom of God, even though it may start out as a small mustard seed, will grow into the biggest of shrubs (cf. Lk. 13:18-19).

Gutiérrez's hope lies not in the determinism of the machine, but in the dynamism of the Spirit leading history towards its fullness in the Kingdom of God. 442

Through the notion of utopia, Gutiérrez is able to speak meaningfully of redemption in a context such as Latin America, characterized as it is by poverty and oppression. He is able to speak of hope in a better future, not because he believes in historical determinism, but because he believes that God has definitively inaugurated the Kingdom in Jesus Christ. This does not lead into a passive fatalism, though, because utopia is a human task. The work of liberation is never understood in a Pelagian sense because Gutiérrez maintains that the root of all oppression is sin, and that genuine integral liberation is made possible only through God's unmerited grace. Human existence, in the last instance, is nothing but a yes or a no to the Lord. Human existence, in the last enables Gutiérrez to relate meaningfully faith and political action without collapsing these two into a dangerous, undifferentiated unity.

4.2 Daniel M. Bell, Jr.

Bell belongs to the radical orthodox school of thought, whose foremost proponent is John Milbank. In his *Theology and Social Theory*, Milbank laments the secularization

See Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [86, 153, 189-190] and [106-109, 189-194, 231-237].

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See Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, [123-126, 215-220, 265-274].

See Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [25, 37, 60].

Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [84, 151, 186].

and the autonomy of secular reason that have resulted in the relegation of Christianity to the realm of private spirituality, devoid of socio-political implications. Theology, Milbank argues, has lost its place as a metadiscourse; theology now finds itself as just one discourse among many competing, and inherently antagonistic, discourses. If theology no longer seeks to position, qualify, or criticize other discourses, then it is inevitable that these discourses will position theology: for the necessity of an ultimate organizing logic...cannot be washed away. All other discourses (Milbank specifically speaks of secular social theory) are based on inherently violent and nihilistic presuppositions. Without Christianity providing its narrative as metadiscourse, the resulting secular state is inherently unjust, founded as it is on nihilistic, violent, and capitalist presuppositions. Thus, either theology is to be understood as *the* metadiscourse or all are doomed, for "either the Church enacts the vision of paradisal community which this judgment opens out, or else it promotes a hellish society beyond any terrors known to antiquity."

Milbank criticizes liberation theologians, including Gutiérrez, because they make the same mistake Karl Rahner made of "naturalizing the supernatural." The liberation theologians believe that God's grace is at work universally in nature, as they respect a proper autonomy of the secular sphere and call for the church to serve the world instead of calling for the church to develop its distinctness as the only locus of true justice. The

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John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford, UK and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1990), 9-23.

Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 1.

Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 433.

See Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 206-210 and 220-223.

fundamental mistake, according to Milbank, is to accept a proper autonomy of the secular, and to engage secular social theory constructively. For Milbank, such capitulation to the secular can only offer an individual religious salvation and a secular social liberation since Christian salvation thus understood has no specific socio-historical form. Milbank claims that, essentially, what liberation theologians "really say is what they claim not to say: namely that Christians should say their prayers, be decent citizens, and otherwise accept society as it is." Instead of accepting the autonomy of the secular sphere and entering into dialogue with secular social theory (which is what liberation theology does), Milbank argues that the church should act as a unique community with theology as its master discourse that narrates the distinct socio-economic and political practices of the church.

Bell accepts all of the above presuppositions of Milbank, while developing a further, and more extended critique of Gutiérrez's liberation theology. Bell's position is thus representative of the general radical orthodox critique of Gutiérrez and is particularly germane to this discussion because he specifically discusses and misunderstands

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Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 243. Milbank shares Ratzinger's critique about Marxism but goes even further: any acceptance of *any* secular social theory unavoidably leads to the acceptance of these theories' nihilistic, violent, and anti-Christian presuppositions.

Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 245-249. I am greatly indebted to Mary Doak for this understanding of Milbank (among many other things).

Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 245.

For a critical view of Milbank's position, see Christopher Insole, "Against Radical Orthodoxy: The Dangers of Overcoming Political Liberalism," *Modern Theology* 20: 2 (April, 2004), 213-241. See also John Berkman and Frederick Bauerschmidt, "Absolutely Fabulous and Civil: John Milbank's Postmodern Critical Augustinianism" in *Philosophy and Theology* 9, no. 3-4 (1996), 435-446.

Gutiérrez's three dimensions of liberation. A summary of Bell's general position and then his critique of Gutiérrez follow. 454

Bell strongly critiques capitalism, describing it as "a culture that in its destruction of people and nature amounts to celebration of collective suicide." The state is understood as an inherently violent entity whose governing technologies capture people's desires and turn them over to the discipline of the capitalist economic system. Since the state is understood as an instrument of capitalism, Bell strongly opposes the notion of "politics as statecraft," which he defines as "the investiture of the state with sovereign authority over the socius and, consequently, privileging the state as the fulcrum of social and political change." Instead of seeking change through the state, people must then resist the state as the violent instrument of capitalism.

As an alternative to the state, Bell proposes building up the church as a counterpolis. The church's "technology of desire" can counteract the state's "technology of desire," understood as the "vast array of assemblages of knowledges, instruments, persons, systems of judgment, buildings and spaces all focused on giving a certain direction to desire." Bell argues for a Christianity that is understood as an ensemble of

A good critical summary of Bell can be found in Miroslav Volf, "Liberation Theology After the End of History: An Exchange," *Modern Theology* 19:2 (April 2003), 261-270. See also Bell's response in Bell, "What Gift is Given? A Response to Volf," *Modern Theology* 19:2 (April 2003), 271-280 and Volf's counter-response in Volf, "Against a Pretentious Church: A Rejoinder to Bell's Response," *Modern Theology* 19:2 (April 2003), 281-285. Another Radical Orthodox critique of Gutiérrez that follows Milbank but is much shorter than Bell's can be found in William Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist*, Challenges in Contemporary Theology (Oxford, UK and Massachusetts, USA: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 178-180.

Daniel M. Bell, Jr., *Liberation Theology After the End of History: the Refusal to Cease Suffering* (London; New York: Routledge, 2001), 12.

Bell, *Liberation Theology*, 13-15 and 19-35.

Bell, *Liberation Theology*, 13.

Bell, *Liberation Theology*, 92.

technologies that work to redirect people's desire, away from the state/capitalism's control, and back to the proper goal, God.

The church especially interrupts the logic of capitalism by administering what Bell calls a spiritual "therapy of forgiveness." Thus, Bell enjoins the victims of injustice to "refuse to cease suffering" by demanding justice and instead extend their forgiveness to their oppressors. Justice, which Bell understands in the classical sense of giving someone her/his due, is not sufficient, and is not to be sought because it merely reinforces the capitalist culture of exchange. It is only the practice of forgiveness, founded on a belief that true reconciliation and restoration are possible, which can interrupt the logic of capitalist exchange.

Given all the above, Bell argues that the efforts of liberation theologians are doomed to failure precisely because they engage in the practice of politics as statecraft. For Bell, liberation theologians seek justice and socio-economic transformation by changing the policies of the state, thus reinforcing the hegemony of the capitalist system, exactly the opposite of what they intend. Because liberation theologians believe in and grant a proper autonomy to the state instead of advocating a church as a distinct polis whose therapy of forgiveness is the only way to combat the logic of capitalism and its grip on people's desires, these theologians are not radical enough for Bell. This mistake of liberation theology has been exacerbated by the recent turn from revolution to a focus on civil society since, Bell argues, liberationists "have embraced civil society as a means whereby the state can be democratized... (that is) de-bureaucratized and de-militarized; it

Bell, *Liberation Theology*, 98-99.

Bell, Liberation Theology, 189-195.

Bell, *Liberation Theology*, 13 and 42-44.

is opened up, made responsive and accountable to the poor majorities." The democratized state is seen now as a bastion of hope. The majority can influence the state, and the state will then act as the protector of the oppressed. The state is no longer seen as merely the servant of the rich and the elite; rather, the state is seen as a means toward greater equality in society. Bell believes that such a vision of politics is fatal to liberationist thought. For Bell, to believe that the state is the source of hope for countering the evils of capitalism is to fall precisely into capitalism's hands.

To help illustrate his point, Bell turns to the work of Raymond Williams (whom Bell uses in his critique of liberation theology but whose position he, as a member of the radical orthodoxy group, can never entirely accept because it is a secular social theory). As Bell notes, Williams' argues that revolutionaries too often focus merely on the base (the economic system) while ignoring the superstructure (culture). Such a move on the revolutionaries' part is doomed to failure because capitalism does not merely operate on the base; rather, capitalism pervades all of culture. The capitalist structure of society is solidified through experience and habit, through attitude and outlook, from as early as we can remember, until the day we die. As Bell puts it in his exposition of Williams' argument:

Williams saw that capitalism is so deeply embedded in the whole lived social process that it shapes the very conditions of the production of experience and common sense and is thereby produced and reproduced (not merely reflected) by cultural practices and institutions. In other words, capitalism is produced and reproduced not only through the ruling classes' ability to press its opinion on others by means of manipulation or indoctrination (as some proponents of a conception of ideology suggest), rather capitalism's power is constantly produced and reproduced in the very habits and structures of feeling of a society, from its

Bell, "'Men of Stone and Children of Struggle': Latin American Liberationists at the end of History," *Modern Theology* 14:1 (January, 1998), 121.

economic forces of production to its cultural practices and institutions. In short, Williams recognized that capitalism saturated all of life. 463

Bell agrees with Williams that if revolution is to be undertaken merely at the base, it is doomed to failure because it leaves the entire superstructure in the hands of capitalism. Instead, what is needed is what Williams calls a "long revolution." Since capitalism is active throughout all facets of life, the revolution must be fought on all fronts, including the cultural. What has to be changed is not just the economic or political system, but the entire structure of experience and what produces it, in other words, "the whole social process." ⁴⁶⁴ Bell agrees with Williams that, even if a revolution were successful at overthrowing the state, it would still find itself "incorporated into the logic of the international capitalist order," and would thus fail to achieve a more just economy. 465 Because of this "paranational hyper capitalism," the way to victory is not via statecraft. Instead, victory is to be achieved through the formation of numerous decentralized "self-managed communities" -- not one centralized socialism, but many decentralized socialisms working together. As Bell describes it:

The many socialisms of the self-managing communities advocated by Williams are characterized by a genuinely participatory democracy. This democracy is anchored in no single overarching body or institution but rather consists of networks of decision making bodies inhabited by multiple opportunities for participation. 466

Bell agrees with much of Williams' analysis of revolution, society, and capitalism. As such, for Bell, since liberation theologians view politics as statecraft, their efforts are doomed to failure. The struggle against capitalism and the evils it produces

⁴⁶³ Bell, "Men of Stone," 126-127.

⁴⁶⁴ Bell, "Men of Stone," 128.

⁴⁶⁵ Bell, "Men of Stone," 129.

⁴⁶⁶ Bell, "Men of Stone," 131.

cannot succeed if the battleground is limited merely to changing the laws and policies of the state. The "revolution" must be "long," that is, operative in all dimensions of life. But Williams' decentralized socialism is insufficient for Bell, for it is only the church, with its technology of desire and therapy of forgiveness, which can free people from the violent, self-aggrandizing logic of the state and capitalism. For Bell, the base ecclesial communities of Latin America could serve as the multiple decentralized socialisms that Williams envisioned.

Amidst his discussion of liberation theologians in general, Bell takes the time to discuss Gutiérrez specifically in order to demonstrate that the idea of politics as statecraft and the failure to develop a truly Christian political theology are not merely "tangential or secondary" to liberation theologians. He singles out Gutiérrez because he is "Latin American liberation theology's most celebrated and highly regarded practitioner." To prove his case about Gutiérrez being committed to the idea of politics as statecraft, Bell brings up two arguments: Gutiérrez's understanding of the "multi-dimensionality" of life, and Gutiérrez's view of the Enlightenment.

Bell correctly points out that Gutiérrez adheres to a differentiated or multidimensional vision of life. Bell also correctly points out that this view of life is most evident in Gutiérrez's discussion of integral liberation, with its three levels. Bell enumerates these levels as the "'social,' the 'personal,' and the 'theological.'".⁴⁶⁸ He has an adequate understanding of Gutiérrez's first and third levels or dimensions. His understanding of the second level is incorrect:

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Bell, "Men of Stone," 116.

Bell, "Men of Stone," 117. Bell uses exactly the same enumeration in Bell, "The Insurrectional Reserve: Latin American Liberationists, Eschatology, and the Catholic Moment," *Communio* 27 (Winter 2000), 656 and 670.

The second level, the personal, consists of a "profound inner freedom." It is an expression of the inner longing of persons to be the artisans of their own destiny; it marks humankind's assumption of conscious responsibility for its own future. This denotes the realm *commonly* referred to as the personal, *private*, or perhaps even the *psychological* (emphasis added). 469

A brief explanation of why these three terms are italicized is in order. First, Bell claims that this second level of integral liberation is "commonly" referred to as he does above. However, he makes no citation of any source, nor does he name anyone else who uses such a designation. I know of no one else who uses Bell's terminology. Second, Bell's use of the terms "private" and "psychological" seem to imply a mutual exclusivity from "social." The leap Bell makes from "personal" to "private", especially since he correctly points out that the aspiration for freedom is shared by all humankind, is invalid. And on the very same page from *A Theology of Liberation* which Bell cites, Gutiérrez explicitly says that "these personal aspects – considered not as excessively privatized, but rather as encompassing all human dimensions – are also under consideration in the contemporary debate concerning greater participation of all in political activity. 470
Instead of "personal" being understood as "private," then, Gutiérrez means the exact opposite: the personal dimension is understood in a social sense.

A deeper problem than reducing Gutiérrez's second dimension of liberation to being merely private is Bell's understanding of Gutiérrez's dimensions as independent of each other.

Central to this differentiated vision of life is the insistence upon the *independence* and autonomy of each of the realms or dimensions... Gutiérrez insists that the theological and political realms are distinct and autonomous, and he embraces the process of secularization – at least insofar as it has enabled the social and political

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⁴⁶⁹ Bell, "Men of Stone," 117.

Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [20-21, 31, 51].

realm to claim its rightful autonomy and independence from the oversight of the church (emphasis added). 471

Bell goes on to say that the autonomy of the realms means that there is no *direct* relation between the theological and the political. For Bell, this separation of the dimensions is necessitated by the understanding of politics as statecraft.

The conception of politics as statecraft requires that a realm called "the political" be carved out and cleared of any potential challengers – like the church – to the sovereignty of the state. Liberationists' adherence to a differentiated vision of life, seen so clearly in Gutiérrez, provides the state with this unchallenged field of dominion. That it is assumed that this field called the "political" belongs under the tutelage of the state can be inferred from what Gutiérrez says about the Enlightenment and its incompletion. ⁴⁷²

It is unclear as to how Bell reads Gutiérrez's view of the Enlightenment. First, Bell argues that Gutiérrez valorizes the Enlightenment as a significant point in humanity's aspiration for liberation. Given this positive reading of the Enlightenment by Gutiérrez, Bell goes on to assert that "it is not a large step to conclude that Gutiérrez accepts the Enlightenment's positing of the state as the proper overseer of the political domain." Bell goes on to defend this conclusion as reasonable, but he then acknowledges that Gutiérrez's embrace of the Enlightenment project "is not uncritical." In fact, Bell notes that Gutiérrez actually distances himself to some degree from the Enlightenment because the project, even as it strives for liberty, actually creates new and more refined forms of exploitation. Bell argues that Gutiérrez's dissatisfaction with the Enlightenment comes not from its view of politics as statecraft

⁴⁷¹ Bell, "Men of Stone," 117-118.

Bell, "Men of Stone," 117-118.

⁴⁷³ Bell, "Men of Stone," 118.

Bell, "Men of Stone," 118.

Bell, "Men of Stone," 118.

but rather from the rise of radical individualism brought on by capitalism. Bell cites the example given by Gutiérrez of the French Revolution that is lauded for proclaiming the right of everyone to participate in society. While creating true democracy is certainly an achievement, Gutiérrez finds this achievement ambiguous because the political gains were not necessarily tied to economic gains, especially for the majority. Bell argues that Gutiérrez points to the rise of radical individualism as that which impeded the full working of the Enlightenment – it is this individualism which severed the logical connection between modern freedoms and improved economic conditions for all.

Bell's argument against liberation theologians in general lies in their understanding of politics as statecraft, which he believes is fatal to their project.

According to Bell, Gutiérrez is firmly within this camp of politics as statecraft because of Gutiérrez's understanding of the multidimensionality of life and his view of the Enlightenment. While Gutiérrez does view engaging in the political realm as a necessary component of genuine liberation, Gutiérrez never reduces liberation merely to the political realm, the collapse of faith and political action. Nor does he surrender the faith's claims in the political sphere, the divorce of faith from political action. Gutierrez accepts a secularity of the state that does not involve the privatization of religion, a point that is clarified by a proper understanding of the three dimensions of liberation.

As regards the argument of multidimensionality, Bell mistakenly asserts that Gutiérrez's three levels or dimensions of liberation and their corresponding realms are always to be held distinct and separate. On the contrary, Gutiérrez emphasizes the opposite. As Gutiérrez unambiguously states in *A Theology of Liberation:*

This is not a matter of three parallel or chronologically successive processes, however. There are three levels of meaning of a single, complex process, which

find its deepest sense and its full realization in the saving work of Christ. These levels of meaning, therefore, are interdependent.",476

Bell correctly notes that for Gutiérrez, faith and political action should not have a direct and immediate relationship, lest a politico-religious messianism result. Bell is correct and faithful to Gutiérrez in saying that for Gutiérrez, the Gospel cannot be read as embodying a particular political option (whereas Bell argues that Christianity *should* be understood as embodying a particular political option). Bell's mistake lies in thinking that Gutiérrez's position is one where the political and the theological realms have no point of intersection. In Gutiérrez's theology, utopia acts as a bridge between our faith and our political options. There is a relation, but it is not "direct." Bell never mentions the notion of utopia, which acts for Gutiérrez as the necessary mediator between faith and political action, provides the relation, and ensures that the relation is not direct or immediate.

Perhaps the reason Bell misses the role that the notion of utopia plays is because of his understanding of the second dimension of liberation (which in Gutiérrez's theology corresponds to utopia) as "private." While it is correct that this dimension operates on the level of personal freedom -- humanity seeking to be the artisan of its own destiny -- Gutiérrez does not understand it to be a matter solely for individuals, as shown earlier. In fact, this dimension of liberation seeks the creation of a new humanity, in a community characterized by solidarity. Liberation is always understood by Gutiérrez as social.

In making his argument that politics is statecraft for Gutiérrez, Bell argues, as cited above, that the "conception of politics as statecraft requires that a realm called 'the political' be carved out and cleared of any potential challengers – like the church – to the

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Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [25, 37, 60].

sovereignty of the state." If such is the case, then Gutiérrez clearly does not view politics as statecraft in the way Bell understands the phrase because Gutiérrez's understanding of the word "politics" is far broader. As Gutiérrez writes in *A Theology of Liberation*, "things political are not only those which one attends to during the free time afforded by one's private life; nor are they even a well-defined area of human existence... Nothing lies outside the political sphere understood in this way." Not only is the church not excluded from politics in Gutiérrez's understanding, everything the church (and anyone else for that matter) does has a political color and has political ramifications. For Gutiérrez, the faith does (and must) have something to say as regards politics. Christianity is necessarily political: but it is never *reduced* merely to the political, nor is it ever *directly* political, in the sense that our politics is directly revealed by God.

As regards the argument concerning the Enlightenment, there are a number of problems with Bell's analysis. First, he makes a logical leap when he says that Gutiérrez, in having a positive view of the Enlightenment, thereby endorses its understanding of politics as statecraft. Second, he undercuts this previous point when he goes on to enumerate all the negative things Gutiérrez does say about the Enlightenment. Third, he concludes from Gutiérrez's failure to distance himself explicitly from the Enlightenment's view of politics as statecraft that Gutiérrez does hold this view – which does not logically follow. Most importantly, though, Bell concludes that Gutiérrez's view of the Enlightenment necessarily leads to a separation of the church from political affairs, leaving such affairs merely to the sovereignty of the state. What Bell does not

Bell, "Men of Stone," 118.

Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [30, 47, 66-67].

seem to get is that Gutiérrez strongly wants the faith to be related to politics, just never directly or immediately.

Finally, Bell argues the futility of the liberationist project, if it continues what he calls its unrevolutionary political theory. He argues against an understanding of politics as statecraft based on Williams' analysis of revolution and how capitalism works in society. But Gutiérrez does not view the "revolution" in terms of base and superstructure. Gutiérrez does not argue that the revolution is needed only on the economic and political fronts. This corresponds only to the first dimension of liberation. Gutiérrez does not neglect the importance of culture. On the contrary, Gutiérrez, as previously shown, constantly argues for the need for a permanent cultural revolution, corresponding to the second dimension of liberation. Gutiérrez is well aware of the pervasiveness of the partial penetration by ideology in people (another way of putting what Williams says). This is precisely why Gutiérrez argues for the need for utopia, as an equal and opposite force, as it were, to ideology. If Bell understood Gutiérrez's use of utopia more thoroughly, including utopia's distinction from ideology, he would see that Williams' analysis of ideology is already incorporated into Gutiérrez's theology.

In summary, Bell, like Milbank, believes that the state is an instrument of capitalism and as such cannot be the venue for true justice. The church should not surrender its sovereignty over the secular state. Only the Church, understood as a distinct polis in which Christian theology provides the shared master discourse and narrates distinctly Christian political and economic practices, can overcome the evils inherent in capitalism, secular society, and the secular social theory upon which this society is built. Bell argues further that politics as statecraft cannot succeed in ridding society of the evils

of capitalism. The church's technology of desire is needed to overcome the state's corruption of people's desires, and the church's therapy of forgiveness is needed in order to succeed where efforts at justice must inevitably fail. Bell has a problem with Gutiérrez because he understands Gutiérrez as advocating the three dimensions of liberation as independent and autonomous from each other. This leads Bell to conclude that Gutiérrez relegates the Church to the private sphere – where it cannot legitimately say anything as regards political issues. Bell seems to think that there are only two options: a complete separation of faith from politics, or a collapse. Either the church embodies its own unique political program (collapse), or the Church is relegated to a private sphere with nothing meaningful to say as regards politics (separation). What Bell does not seem to realize is that neither of these two options is acceptable for Gutiérrez. As presented numerous times previously, one of Gutiérrez's main goals is precisely the articulation of the proper relationship between faith and political action, without separating or collapsing the two poles. Gutiérrez achieves this goal through the use of utopia as a mediator, but Bell misunderstands or neglects this function of utopia in Gutiérrez's thought.

Conclusion

Both Cardinal Ratzinger and Bell criticize Gutiérrez, but they do so from opposite directions. Cardinal Ratzinger thinks that Gutiérrez, through his use of utopia within the three dimensions of liberation, merges faith and political action. According to Cardinal Ratzinger, Gutiérrez's use of utopia subsumes the first dimension of liberation - what corresponds to political action - and renders the third dimension of liberation -what corresponds to faith- functionally meaningless. Cardinal Ratzinger does not seem to

understand utopia's function in Gutiérrez's theology as a bridge between faith and political action: relating these two poles without collapsing them. Ratzinger does not seem to understand that Gutiérrez views liberation to be one single, complex process, with three interdependent dimensions.

On the other hand, Bell thinks that Gutiérrez separates the faith from the political process. For Bell, following Milbank, Gutiérrez's church is not sufficiently political because the church has surrendered to the sovereignty of the secular state and does not maintain a distinct polis with its own economic and political practices. Bell believes that because Gutiérrez understands politics as statecraft, Gutiérrez's project is doomed to failure. Politics as statecraft cannot liberate the poor from capitalist oppression because the state, as an instrument of capitalism, can never overcome capitalism's evil; only if the church enacts its alternative political economy based on the therapy of forgiveness and the technology of desire can meaningful change occur. But like Cardinal Ratzinger, Bell does not understand that, for Gutiérrez, liberation is a single process. Bell understands Gutiérrez's three dimensions as autonomous from each other, which is the opposite of what Gutiérrez holds. Therefore, Bell is not able to see that for Gutiérrez, the faith is brought to bear upon the political sphere; but the relationship is never direct or immediate. The notion of utopia precisely allows such a relation without devolving into a collapse, like Cardinal Ratzinger fears.

Both critics are correct in their understanding that Gutiérrez's three dimensions of liberation are central to his theological project. So why are their critiques so divergent? Cardinal Ratzinger misunderstands Guiterrez's use of the notion of utopia, believing that all three of Gutiérrez's dimensions of liberation are subsumed therein, rather than merely

interrelated. Bell seems to neglect the notion of utopia altogether. He ends up with the three dimensions being independent of each other; and thus faith has no real relation to the political sphere.

Why do both critics misunderstand Gutiérrez so much? One can only speculate. Gutiérrez has a very complex, carefully nuanced and precise understanding of utopia. Could either or both of these critics just have failed to grasp the complexity of Gutiérrez's use of the notion of utopia with all its precise distinctions? The former Cardinal Ratzinger is certainly justified in wanting to ensure that faith and political action not be conjoined into each other in an undifferentiated manner. Could this concern have caused him to misread Gutiérrez? Bell is certainly justified in desiring a church and a faith that is strongly involved in political affairs. Could this desire have caused him to misread Gutiérrez as well? The bottom line is this: regardless of the validity of these critics' concerns in general, the fact remains that Gutiérrez neither collapses faith and political action, nor separates them; the notion of utopia allows for their relation without this relation being immediate.

Given the importance and centrality of utopia to Gutierrez's theological project, and given how some critics seem to misunderstand this crucial notion, I suggest that Gutierrez write more about this specific subject. As seen in the previous chapter of this dissertation, Gutierrez hardly mentions utopia in his books written after *A Theology of Liberation*, though he certainly presupposes it. As seen in this chapter, critics do misunderstand his use of the concept, and in fact center their critique around utopia. I believe that if Gutierrez were to write further on his use of utopia, given the more than 30

years since the publication of *A Theology of Liberation*, people would understand his theology better and some unwarranted critiques could be avoided.

In this chapter, the argument about the importance of utopia and its mediating role of relating faith to political action without collapse in Gutiérrez's theology has been sustained. Through a discussion of some of Gutiérrez's critics, the importance of a precise understanding of utopia in Gutiérrez's theology has been demonstrated. There should be no misunderstanding of Gutiérrez and his efforts at properly relating faith and political action. Since the envisioning of a more just and humane society plays such a crucial role in this relation of faith and political action, misinterpreting Gutiérrez's use of utopia could result in a reading of Gutiérrez that sees either a collapse of these poles, or a separation, neither of which Gutiérrez intends or posits. It is only through a precise understanding of utopia as Gutiérrez uses the concept that an adequate understanding of Gutiérrez's theology is possible.

CHAPTER 5

LIBERATION IN THE PHILIPPINES: A TEST CASE FOR UTOPIA

The Republic of the Philippines is a country of 80 million people, predominantly Catholic, and characterized by the same realities of oppression and injustice that Gutierrez saw in Latin America. In 1991, the Philippine Catholic church attempted to bring its faith to bear upon the dire situation by convening the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines, a historic gathering nearly 500-strong with the purpose of returning the church to relevance in the face of Philippine social reality. ⁴⁷⁹ As will become evident below, the council did not do enough.

To this point what has been discussed has been Gutiérrez's understanding of liberation as a single complex process with three interdependent dimensions, and especially the role that the notion of utopia plays within this understanding as a bridge that allows for the mediation between faith and political action without collapse. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that a misunderstanding of the idea of utopia's

⁴⁷⁹ The nearly 500 participants included all 94 of the Philippine bishops, the superiors of all the major religious orders, the presidents or rectors of all Catholic universities, the rectors or deans of all ecclesiastical faculties and major seminaries, and 156 female and male lay leaders, including the leaders of all major lay organizations and trans-parochial communities in the country. The first Plenary Council of the Philippines happened only 38 years earlier in 1953, but the leaders of the Philippine church judged that a second council was needed to answer the challenge for renewal raised by the Second Vatican Council and by the many changes brought about by the modern world. In this sense, the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines in 1991 was to the Philippines as the conference of the Latin American Bishops of Medellin in 1968 was to Latin America: both councils attempted to bring the Catholic Church into dialogue with the hopes and issues of a specific people.

role within the process of liberation can result in a misreading of Gutiérrez's theology as advocating either a complete separation of the poles of faith and political action, or an identification of these two poles. Examining a context similar to, yet distinct from Latin America will further demonstrate the centrality of a vision of a more just and humane society to Gutiérrez's theology

A presentation of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines' analysis of its country's situation, especially the economic, political, socio-cultural, and religious context follows. The council's document⁴⁸⁰ considers the current Philippine situation to be seriously problematic due to the extreme poverty, oppression, and inequality in the country. This unjust situation presents a serious and urgent challenge to the Philippine church. The response of the Council to this challenge is to supply its vision for a renewed church and a renewed evangelization. Finally, an examination of the Second Plenary Council's insights through the lens of Gutiérrez's theology, especially his use of the notion of utopia, demonstrates that the document's own utopian goal for the Philippines falls short because it lacks certain key elements of Gutiérrez's understanding of utopia. The council's theology can be strengthened by adopting Gutiérrez's understanding more thoroughly and systematically.

Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, *Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines* (Pasay City, Philippines: *Paulines* Publishing House, 1992). Henceforth, PCP II. A Philippine bishop, Teodoro Bacani (one of the three drafters of the PCP II conciliar document), provides an insightful commentary on PCP as the Philippine church's attempt to receive Vatican II. See Teodoro Bacani, "Church of the Poor: The Church in the Philippines' Reception of Vatican II," *East Asian Pastoral Review* Volume 42 (2005) no. 1-2. The full text can be found online at http://eapi.admu.edu.ph/eapr005/bacani.htm. Virgilio Ojoy devotes a chapter in his book to the studying how Marxism can profitably be incorporated into PCP II's church of the poor. See Ojoy, *Marxism & Religion: A Fusion of Horizons* (Manila, Philippines: University of Santo Tomas, 2001), 296-333. Other commentaries on PCP II include Antonio Moreno, "PCP II Ecclesiology: A Critical Evaluation," *Landas Journal of Loyola School of Theology* Volume 8 Issue 1 January 1994, pp. 36-53. See also Renato Ocampo, "Pastoral Implications Of Basic Ecclesial Communities; A Commentary On the PCP II Text," *Landas Journal of Loyola School of Theology* Volume 8 Issue 1 January 1994, pp. 27-35.

5.1 The Philippine Situation according to the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines⁴⁸¹

In a fairly short paragraph, the Council's document paints a rather bleak picture of the economic and political context of the Philippines:

Thus, on the economic side: The poverty and destitution of the great mass of our people are only too evident, contrasting sharply with the wealth and luxury of the relatively few families, the elite top of our social pyramid. And on the political side: Power and control are also elitist, lopsidedly concentrated on established families that tend to perpetuate themselves in political dynasties. 482

When the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines talks about the destitution of the Filipino people, it is not exaggerating. At the time of the convening of the conference in the early 1990s, per capita income in the Philippines was less than \$600 per year. 483 While it is true that the cost of living in the Philippines is significantly cheaper than a more developed country such as the United States, \$600 is a pretty meager amount. For perspective, the minimum wage is approximately five dollars a day, which translates to \$1350 per year assuming one works 270 days in the year. Thus, average per capita income in the Philippines is *less than half* the minimum wage. As a result, almost three out of five Filipinos live below the poverty line (59%). Amidst all this poverty, there are isolated pockets of great wealth, concentrated in the hands of a very elite few. The gap between the rich and the poor in the Philippines is so great that The World Bank

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In this chapter, I shall be presenting PCP II's own analysis of the Philippine situation in order to see how it proceeds and where it fails to carry out the logic of its own insights.

PCP II, no. 24.

Most of the statistics in the following pages come from PCP II, appendix I, 275-291 in the conciliar document.

describes the country as having "one of the most unequal income distributions" of any country.

This huge gap between the rich and the poor in the Philippines suggests that even the above quoted per capita income of less than \$600 per year, a figure already very low, is actually far lower for most Filipinos. That statistic is an average figure – it includes, for example, the fact that the Marcos family has over \$10 billion in Swiss banks. The average Filipino makes significantly less than \$600 per year.

The situation would not be so dire if somehow the Filipino people were provided with basic necessities such as health and housing. Unfortunately, those most in need of such basic goods and services rarely get them. 486 Over 40% of the national budget of the Philippines goes to foreign debt-servicing. That means far less is available for basic services, and also helps preclude any real economic growth.

The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines further describes the poverty faced by Filipinos when it laments the fact that countless women and children have been "forced by poverty into the flesh trade." Further, a minimum of hundreds of thousands are literally homeless, and an even higher number of Filipinos have sought work in other countries "under such conditions that are frequently oppressive."

The Council's document goes on to argue that an even more fundamental aspect of the difficulty of Filipino life is the fact that "poverty and inequality joined to the

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PCP II, Appendix I, 278.

World Bank, The Philippines: The Challenge of Poverty, Report No. 7144-PH, October 17, 1988, ii. As quoted in Appendix I of PCP II.

Philippine Star (a national daily), February 3, 2004, 1.

PCP II, Appendix I, 277.

PCP II, Appendix I, 278.

absence of reliable social services seem to be a part of a self-perpetuating social system and political culture." As with wealth, power is concentrated in the hands of an elite few, who control major decisions even on both the national and regional level of the government. The Council laments that any meaningful change proposed, in terms of such things as fairer taxation or more equitable land distribution, is effectively blocked by these elite few who seek to protect their own positions of wealth and privilege.

Despite the fact that the Philippines is a democracy, political parties do not provide an adequate solution to the country's ills. As the Council's document notes, "political parties have no coherent ideology that would transform the status quo and no consistent history of helping the poor."⁴⁹⁰ Instead, political parties in the Philippines are merely vehicles for the personal ambition of politicians, who switch parties or create new ones every election, depending upon political expediency. The Council notes that "elections have become an expensive and immoral process." 491

The entrenchment of this flawed political system can be demonstrated by examining Philippine culture and some of its deepest values. Philippine society is still largely feudal in nature. The "little person" finds security in having a "big person" as a patron. 492 The patron is usually the landowner and/or the local politician. When a Filipino is in need (such as when a child requires hospitalization), s/he turns to the patron for help. When the patron lends the poor person the needed financial help, the poor person now has utang na loob, a Filipino term meaning inner debt or debt of self. To the

⁴⁸⁹ PCP II, Appendix I, 278-279.

⁴⁹⁰ PCP II, Appendix I, 279.

⁴⁹¹ PCP II, Appendix I, 279.

⁴⁹² PCP II, Appendix I, 279.

Filipino, this *utang na loob* is sacred – to the extent that the Council describes that "its demand for reciprocity may break ethical standards of behavior." Probably the worst thing that can be said to a Filipino is that s/he has no *utang na loob*. Therefore, the conference noted that any rationality flies out the window when it comes time to pay the debt. The Filipino then, for example, has to vote for this particular politician in the next election, regardless of performance. This fact is borne out by statistics – the Council quotes a study that shows that only 4% of Filipinos know where their elected officials stand and how they vote on significant issues. Philippine politics is not determined by issues; rather, it is based upon personality and patronage. Thus, the Second Plenary Council noted that, even though the corruption of the majority of politicians in the Philippines is "universally recognized," these same politicians continue to get reelected.

That the Filipino will always seek to pay his/her debt is a good thing, an important value. However, while this deep sense of gratitude is of itself noble and virtuous, it can be perverted into helping keep entrenched a situation of injustice. The Council examined some other deep Filipino cultural values that also get twisted into perpetuating the oppressive economic and political situation in the Philippines.

Pakikisama, literally "getting along well with others," is very important to the Filipino. Indeed, few things are more important to the Filipino than having smooth interpersonal relationships. There is thus a strong tendency among Filipinos never to

PCP II, Appendix I, 283.

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Ateneo de Manila University, "Public Opinion Survey: August 1988," Table 13, 50-52, cited in PCP II, Appendix I, 280.

⁴⁹⁵ PCP II, no. 25.

ruffle anyone's feathers, even if s/he is in a disadvantaged position. The Council noted that *pakikisama* "results in political dynasties, family monopolies, the protection of erring family members, and nepotism." If someone is cheating, or stealing, even from public coffers in the case of an elected official, the Filipino will tend not to "blow the whistle" for fear of being labeled *walang pakisama* (does not know how to get along) – which is almost as bad as not having *utang na loob*. So Filipinos tend to turn a blind eye in the face of graft and corruption, thus helping maintain said injustice.

Finally, Filipinos have a *Bahala na* (literally – leave it up to God) mentality. This value stems from a deep belief in God's loving providence. However, this value very often becomes fatalism – the Filipino tends to believe that her/his lot in life has been preordained and is God's will. The Council suggested that "a negative *bahala na* attitude (has) caused much apathy and indifference to national issues." Given this strong belief that anything that happens in life must be God's will, the Filipino sees little hope for meaningful social change. Filipinos tend to believe that they cannot change things on their own, only God can do so. Filipinos thus tend to look for a *himala* (miracle), where God intervenes and rescues the Filipino from her/his personal situation of poverty. Lacking this miracle, hope is placed on salvation, understood as going to heaven in the afterlife. Filipinos thus place great importance on personal piety and prayer. The Council described Filipino folk Catholicism along these lines.

For most of our people today the faith is centered on the practice of the rites of popular piety. Not on the Word of God, doctrines, sacramental worship (beyond baptism and matrimony). Not on community. Not on building up our world unto

PCP II, Appendix I, 284.

PCP II, Appendix I, 283.

the image of the Kingdom. And we say it is because the "unchurched," the vast majority of our people, greatly lack knowledge of and formation in the faith. 498

In this passage, the Council's document argued that faith cannot simply be a question of piety. Genuine faith must include building community and building up the world unto the image of the Kingdom of God. This description of the faith of the majority of Filipinos by the Council includes a criticism of that faith -- what Gutiérrez calls the "quantitative" understanding of salvation. As previously shown, Gutiérrez explains this as a cure for sin in this life, in virtue of a salvation to be attained *after* this life. In the above passage, the Council seems to be arguing instead for what Gutiérrez would call the "qualitative" understanding of salvation – one where historical existence is not devalued as merely a stepping stone to the next life. Rather, the next life is seen as a transformation, a bringing to completion and fruition of this present life. In this view of salvation, it is important to build community, to make our world unto the image of the Kingdom of God, and not just to pray for an afterlife.

The Second Plenary Council provided an accurate reading of the Philippine situation and all that ails the country. It has goals that are similar to Gutiérrez's – it is attempting to articulate an understanding of Christ, the Philippine church, and its mission. Indeed the Council seeks a theology that will be truly responsive to the situation of poverty and oppression in the Philippines. Moreover, the Council is certainly on the right track in the above quoted section and in other similar ones where it attempts to move

⁴⁹⁸ PCP II. no. 13.

⁴⁹⁹ Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, [83-84, 149-151, 183-186].

Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, [84-86, 151-152, 186-189]

from a more quantitative to a more qualitative understanding of salvation. Unfortunately, the conciliar document is not as consistent in this view, as will be demonstrated below.

The Council's document lacks Gutiérrez's consistency and systematic rigor – which is understandable given that it is a document produced by hundreds of minds, working within a limited time frame. Thus, while the Council uses a lot of terms and concepts found in Gutiérrez's theology (Church of the poor, preferential option for the poor, etc.), in the Council's case, the whole thing does not quite come together. First, as already mentioned above, the document is not consistent in its understanding of salvation. In some instances, it seems to be proceeding from a qualitative understanding, much like Gutiérrez. More often than not, however, the quantitative view is the one operative. Another way of putting this is in terms of the Distinction of Planes model, criticized by Gutiérrez as inadequate for his context, which seems to be the predominant understanding of the Second Plenary Council. 501 Second, and this proceeds from the first, the Council seems confused as regards the notion of "liberation." While the document at various points discusses all three of Gutiérrez's dimensions of liberation, it does not do so systematically. It does not present the three precisely as essential and interrelated dimensions of the single complex process of liberation – with the notion of utopia acting as a unifying concept that allows relation without collapse. Finally, and this point in turn proceeds from the preceding two, the Council seems reluctant to have the Church "get its hands dirty" in terms of getting involved in the temporal sphere. There is a strong emphasis on what individuals can do in terms of social change – the Church's mission is presented more as forming the consciences of these individuals through the Church's evangelization. There is a lot less emphasis on what the Church as an

⁵⁰¹ See Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, [36-46, 56-72, 76-97].

institution can do in the temporal sphere as regards the poverty and oppression experienced by the majority of Filipinos. Thus, unlike Gutierrez for his own context, the Council document does not quite succeed in articulating the proper relationship between faith and political action for the Philippine context.

5.2 The Vision of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines

Given the Council's analysis of the Philippine situation, the document asks how people in the Philippine Church must live as Christians, as Filipino Catholics.⁵⁰² Its response is two-fold: it envisions a church renewed, and it looks to a renewed evangelization.

How is the Filipino Church to live? The Council states that, "the answer cannot be abstract for it leads people back to the person of Christ...." To live as Christians today means to know, love, and follow Christ in his Church. Thus, the Council begins its plan for a renewed Philippine church with a discussion of Jesus.

Citing Scriptures heavily, the Council's document tells Christ's story. It talks about Jesus being sent by the Father in order to proclaim the Kingdom, a Kingdom made present in Jesus' very person. However, the document's description of the Kingdom in this section unfortunately reinforces the quantitative understanding of salvation. It describes the Kingdom with little if any reference to how people experience it or what it means in history. "All are invited to the Kingdom on no merit of theirs. God's Kingdom is the gift of salvation. It is the offer of pardon to sinners. *It is eternal life*. The kingdom is a banquet, a table-fellowship, a joyful communion with the Lord and with one's fellow

See PCP II, nos. 34-36.

⁵⁰³ PCP II, no. 35.

human beings (emphasis added)."⁵⁰⁴ Everything this passage says is certainly true, as attested to by the Gospel, and the document cites numerous scriptural passages in this regard. However, there is no discussion in this passage from the Council of what salvation means in history. One is left with the impression that salvation is all about going to heaven after this earthly life – that salvation does not include and demand liberation from all that oppresses people here and now, including oppression in the political, social, and economic spheres.

The Council emphasizes that the Kingdom is God's gift, a promise that will certainly be fulfilled, but this gift of God must be received actively. The document notes that the Kingdom is promised to those who do the will of the Father, to the ones mentioned in the Beatitudes. In between now and the end of time when the promise is to be fulfilled in its entirety, is the time of the Church.

The Council envisions the Philippine Church as a community of Christ's disciples. It emphasizes the need for genuine communion, and active participation by every member. Very importantly, the document talks about the Philippine Church being a Church of the Poor. Unfortunately, the quantitative understanding of salvation again seems to be the one operative, as can be seen from the Council's definition of Church of the Poor.

What then is the "Church of the Poor?" It means a Church that embraces and practices the evangelical spirit of poverty, which combines detachment from possessions with a profound trust in the Lord as the sole source of salvation...

The "Church of the Poor" is one where, at the very least the poor are not discriminated against because of their poverty, and they will not be deprived of their "right to receive in abundance the help of the spiritual goods of the Church, especially that of the word of God and the sacraments from the pastors (LG 37)." In practice this means that whoever cannot pay the usual stipends or stole fees

⁵⁰⁴ PCP II, no. 39.

because of poverty, will not be deprived of the sacraments or other necessary spiritual services. 505

It is striking that the first practical implication of "Church of the Poor" discussed by the Council concerns stipends and stole fees. Here the Council is talking about the Church of the Poor being primarily concerned that the poor receive spiritual services from the Church. While spiritual services are certainly important, this quotation from the document again helps create the impression of an overly spiritualized understanding of salvation.

To be fair, this is not all that the Council has to say as regards being the Church of the Poor. It says that God "calls us most urgently to serve the poor and the needy." It talks about the necessity of defending the rights of the poor, of the Church not being silent in the face of exploitation and injustice. In fact, it describes the Church of the Poor as one "willing to follow Jesus Christ through poverty and oppression in order to carry out the work of salvation." However, even as the Council says this, it continues to reinforce a quantitative view of salvation as it immediately quotes *Lumen Gentium* no. 8 saying that while the Church needs resources to carry out her mission, she "is not set up to seek earthly glory, but to proclaim, and this by her own example, humility and self-denial."

It is true that the Church should not see herself as an end unto herself. The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines is certainly correct in its understanding that people cannot achieve perfection within history, and certainly not independently of God's

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⁵⁰⁵ PCP II, nos. 125 and 128.

⁵⁰⁶ PCP II, no. 122.

PCP II, no. 135.

⁵⁰⁸ PCP II, no. 135.

grace. However, the Council here does seem to be emphasizing an overly spiritualized understanding of salvation – where heavenly glory is all that is important, to the neglect or at least diminished appreciation of historical existence.

There is nothing technically wrong with the Council's statements concerning the Church of the Poor in the Philippines, but its emphasis is misplaced and results in a distortion. The church should, of course, be concerned with spiritual services. The concern for alleviating poverty should not lead to an understanding that people create heaven by themselves within history. The Christian faith indeed proclaims an afterlife where the fullness of God's gift of salvation will be realized. However, the Council itself acknowledges that the majority of Filipinos are "unchurched." Amidst their poverty and suffering, most Filipinos feel it is their destiny that they are poor and that their only hope lies either in a "miracle," or, failing that, in the afterlife. Therefore, the presentation of the vision of the Church of the Poor that begins with the importance of spiritual services is wrong. Emphasis should not be on stipends or stole fees. Furthermore, in discussing the need for historical action towards liberation, where is the wisdom in immediately following this with a discussion that what people seek is not earthly but heavenly glory? The way the Council presents its vision for a renewed church tends to reinforce the quantitative view of salvation, which is not what the Philippine church needs, in a context where such a Catholic country has so many acquiescing in the face of such great inequality and oppression...

Another way of describing the Council's approach is through the Distinction of Planes model. In Gutiérrez's discussion of this model, the world is seen as autonomous

from the Church.⁵⁰⁹ The Church, as an institution, is not to interfere with the temporal sphere except through moral teaching. Temporal matters are left to individual consciences. In this model, the Church has two main missions: evangelization, and inspiring the temporal sphere.⁵¹⁰

As shown previously, Gutiérrez decided that the Distinction of Planes model is no longer adequate, especially in view of a situation of poverty and oppression such as is found in Latin America. The Philippine context, in this regard, is very similar to the Latin American situation. Both share a Spanish colonial heritage. Both are experiencing great economic hardship and injustice. Both are very Catholic in terms of percentages of population. In both, there is a strong current of "folk Catholicism." It is reasonable to assert that Gutiérrez's stance as regards the Distinction of Planes model holds true for the Philippines as well.

That the Council holds to a Distinction of Planes model can be most clearly seen in its presentation of the second part of its vision – that of a renewed evangelization. The Council's document divides its presentation of this vision for a renewed evangelization into two main parts. The first part is entitled "Announcing a Message of Salvation." The second part is entitled "Announcing a Message of Liberation."

The Council asks what the Church's mission in the Philippines is, given its understanding of itself as a community of disciples sent by the Lord to work in the

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See Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, [36-46, 56-72, 76-97].

⁵¹⁰ Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, [37, 56-58, 76-80].

particular Philippine situation. It phrases the question thus: "How do we envision a renewed evangelization?" ⁵¹¹

The Council talks about three components of this renewed evangelization. First, it talks about the need for a renewed catechesis, one that is centered on Christ and rooted in Scripture. The renewed catechesis must also be authentically Filipino and systematic. Second, it talks about the need for a renewed social apostolate. The third component is a renewed worship, which includes both liturgical renewal, and a purification of popular piety. S14

For the Council, the goal of this renewed evangelization, with these three components, is a "properly integrated spirituality." It describes this integrated spirituality by quoting a Philippine seminar paper on the 1987 Synod of Bishops.

...an integrated spirituality that unites faith in the Lord with justice and charity to His brothers and sisters and joins together a hope for the world to come with an intense commitment to transform the world; a spirituality that seeks the salvation of the total human person while keeping in mind the primacy of his/her spiritual needs; a spirituality that seeks change not only in interior attitudes but in ecclesial and societal structures; a spirituality that witnesses through action to the faith he/she professes; a spirituality finally, that dynamically inter-relates communion and mission in the Church's life. 515

This passage on integrated spirituality provides the kind of understanding needed in the Philippine context. While there still seems to be an emphasis on the afterlife and spiritual needs, at least this definition of integrated spirituality includes the necessary attention to

PCP II, no. 155.

See PCP II, nos.157-164.

⁵¹³ See PCP II, nos. 165-166.

⁵¹⁴ See PCP II, nos. 167-181.

[&]quot;One People, One Mission," Reflection Paper of Tagaytay Echo Seminar on the 1987 Synod of Bishops, as quoted in PCP II, no. 188.

the need for transforming the world, and the recognition that change is required, not just in individuals, but in societal structures as well. Unfortunately, the view proposed in the above quotation is not operative throughout the conciliar document.

In the second part of the Council's vision for a renewed evangelization, "Announcing a Message of Liberation," the document describes the Church's mission as one of evangelization and salvation; and the emphasis is still on the spiritual and the afterlife.

The Church's essential mission, following that of Christ, is a mission of evangelization and salvation. She draws her zeal from the divine love. Evangelization is the proclamation of salvation, which is a gift of God. Through the word of God and the Sacraments, man (sic) is freed in the first place from the power of sin and the power of the Evil One which oppress him; and he (sic) is brought into a communion of love with God. Following her Lord who "came into the world to save sinners," the Church desires the salvation of all people. 516

It is true that the Church must be concerned with salvation from sin. It is also true that proclaiming the word of God and dispensing the sacraments are very important. Here, however, the Council is separating this understanding of salvation from temporal liberation. The focus is on "saving sinners," not saving people as people, from all that oppresses them in their historical situation. This focus leaves the impression that hearing the Word and receiving the sacraments, thus being freed from sin, are all that are important. There is no emphasis on the fact that structures that oppress and lead to poverty are indeed sinful as well. In fact, the Council makes it clear that evangelization and salvation "cannot be identified with, nor be reduced to, a task of temporal liberation."517

PCP II, no. 241.

517 PCP II, no. 242.

The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines does not ignore the need for temporal liberation, however. It acknowledges that, "the human person to be evangelized does not live in a vacuum but is constantly barraged by social, economic, and political problems." Therefore, the document emphasizes that social concerns are "inextricably linked with the evangelizing mission." However, the Council seems to understand this link in terms of "pre-evangelization," as will be shown next.

The Council's document quotes the 1975 encyclical of Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, as it says that evangelization is not complete without temporal liberation because "the new commandment of love cannot be proclaimed without promoting in justice and in peace the true, authentic development of the human person." Is this quotation arguing for an understanding of evangelization and salvation that integrates human development, or does it understand the need for human development in the sense of "pre-evangelization?" The latter interpretation seems more correct because the Council clearly wants to distinguish evangelization and salvation from temporal liberation. In the very next paragraph, the document says that: "The Church takes great care to maintain clearly and firmly both the unity and the distinction between evangelization and human promotion: unity because she seeks the good of the whole person; distinction, because these two tasks enter, in different ways, into her mission." ⁵²¹

The proclamation of the Gospel is an essential aspect of the Church's mission, but the notion, which the Council seems to adopt here, that authentic human development is

PCP II, no. 243.

PCP II, no. 239.

⁵²⁰ EN, no. 31, as quoted in PCP II, no. 243.

PCP II, no. 244.

to be sought *in order* that the Gospel can be preached, is incorrect. It seems as though the Council is advocating building up the temporal sphere as some sort of "preevangelization," rather than advocating the need for human development for its own sake. Without saying that human development should be the be-all and end-all of the Church's mission, is it not better to help humans because they are humans, and not just because they are potential recipients of the Gospel?

The above "pre-evangelization" understanding is unfortunate because the Council recognizes that the Church in the Philippines "is a significant cultural force." By this. the Council means that the Church in the Philippines has enormous resources and a high degree of credibility with the Filipino people. The document talks about the Church in the Philippines as having "a vision of the human person and human dignity, a vision of society and the common good, which have implications for how society should be organized."523 The Church in the Philippines is indeed powerful, and it is trusted by the people. Would it not be more so if it attended to temporal liberation and human development simply because it sees in the downtrodden the image of the Savior? It should do so because it believes in the inherent dignity of every human being, as created in God's image and likeness, and indwelt by the Spirit of the risen Son, and not just to make its preaching of the Gospel more authentic. Given the fatalism and other-worldly spirituality that many Filipinos have, should not the Philippine church be advocating a qualitative understanding of salvation understood as liberation, with Gutiérrez's three dimensions held in a complex, interdependent unity? There need be no opposition between this life and the next, between salvation and temporal liberation. Gutiérrez has

⁵²² PCP II, no. 247.

⁵²³ PCP II, no. 247.

shown the inadequacy of the Distinction of Planes model. Instead, he has argued for an understanding of history seen as one – a Christo-finalized history.⁵²⁴ This unified understanding of history allows for a qualitative view of salvation. Such an understanding would allow for the Council's vision to be more consistent in its attempts to unite faith to political action without reducing the Gospel to temporal liberation.

The Council declares that Filipinos should be *maka-tao*, *maka-bayan*, and *maka-Diyos* (pro-person, pro-country, and pro-God). ⁵²⁵ It believes that, if these values are interiorized, profound change in Philippine society will result. This leads to the Council's utopian vision for the Filipino nation, now quoted in full:

This is our vision. That all may have life (mabigyan ng buhay) –

We shall have to create a free nation:

where human dignity and solidarity are respected and promoted; where moral principles prevail in socio-economic life and structures; where justice, love, and solidarity are the inner driving forces of development.

We shall have to build a sovereign nation:

where every tribe and faith are respected; where diverse tongues and traditions work together for the good of all; where membership is a call to participation and involvement and leadership a summons to generous service.

Ours will have to be a people:

in harmony with one another through unity in diversity; in harmony with creation, and in harmony with God.

⁵²⁴ Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, [86, 153, 189-190].

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PCP II, no. 251. PCP II defines these Filipino terms in the Glossary – "A positive orientation towards the advocacy of the human person (tao), the nation (bayan) and God (Diyos). This orientation may literally be translated into 'pro-person, pro-country, pro-God."

Ours shall be a civilization of life and love. 526

A beautiful vision of a utopia, much like what Gutiérrez advocates, one which many dream will come to pass, as soon as possible. Yet it can be noted that the vision speaks entirely in historical terms. It does not speak of an afterlife at all. It speaks of a people and a nation to be built in this life, based on Gospel values.

The Council's document notes that this "utopian vision of a transformed nation" stands in "stark and tragic contrast" to the dark picture that is the actual Philippine situation. The current Philippine situation, as described earlier, prevents the coming to fruition of this dream of a more humane and equitable society. And yet, the Council notes the strong longing the Filipino has for *kaayusan* – order out of chaos – in her/his life. The Filipino thirsts for the fullness of life that is the Lord's unmerited gift, but which the Council notes is also a task for him/her, a challenge. The question then facing the Philippine Church is:

How should the Church foster social transformation and assist the little people in bringing about harmony and *kaayusan* in their lives? How should the Church announce the Kingdom of Justice, Peace and Love in the context of great social, economic, political and cultural imbalances? How can we, as a community of the Lord's disciples, be a leaven of social transformation?⁵²⁹

The answer lies precisely in the Council's utopian vision, if it is understood the way Gutiérrez advocates – as the necessary mediating bridge between faith and political action. It is such an understanding that will allow the Council to solve its inconsistency as regards the Distinction of Planes understanding and the urgent demands for justice in

⁵²⁶ PCP II, nos. 253-255.

PCP II, no. 256.

⁵²⁸ See PCP II, no. 257.

PCP II, no. 261.

the Philippine situation. The Council does not quite reach this unified perspective that
Gutiérrez has achieved

The Council's own answer begins with sin. It acknowledges that it is sinfulness that is at the root of the socio-economic and political problems that plague the Philippines. It argues that the Christian conscience must recoil at the sins committed against the poor. Furthermore, it argues that it is not just personal sin committed by individuals that we must confront, but also "structures of sin" or social sins – structures which cause and perpetuate social injustice.

For the Council, confronting sin demands conversion – *metanoia*. The call of Jesus for repentance in light of the coming of the Kingdom is a call to conversion, not just as individuals, but as a society. There needs to be a social transformation. The Council is quick to note, though, that this conversion is not just one moment of definitive change. *Metanoia* is a lifelong task – people must continually discern how to act as Christ's disciples especially in the face of sin.

This need for constant discernment is the reason why the Council argues for the need to form a "social conscience." It calls the lack of such a conscience in the Filipino a "major tragedy." It notes how Filipino cultural values can frequently get in the way of correct moral judgment – often resulting in the commission or perpetuation of injustice. As already shown, values like *pakikisama* and *utang na loob* can be and are perverted at times in the service of injustice. Thus, the Council argues strongly for the need to develop a strong sense of morality. For when

...properly formed, (conscience) can bring its moral force to bear upon the social environment. *Individuals* would then be moved by their consciences to critique the social environment, reject and move against sinful social structures, and set up

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See PCP II, nos. 283-289.

in their stead those that allow and promote the flowering of fuller life (emphasis added). ⁵³¹

Again, what the Council is saying in this passage is correct, as far as it goes.

However, once again the stress for social change is placed upon individuals – not on the Church as an institution or as a community of the disciples of Christ. The Church is certainly involved as regards the development of a sense of ethics – but is that the extent of what the Church can and should do in a situation of widespread injustice? Is the Church as an institution to be limited to teaching and preaching?

In forming Christian consciences, the Council states that emphasis must be placed on having a love of preference for the poor. Such a love is patterned after Christ's own example, and "takes on the greatest urgency in our country where a very great number of our people wallow in abject poverty and misery while tremendous social privileges and deference are accorded the rich and the powerful." The Council makes it clear that the option for the poor "is an essential option of Christian faith, an obligatory choice." However, the Distinction of Planes understanding arises in the very next sentence of the conciliar document. "Eternal salvation depends on the living out of a love of preference for the poor because the poor and needy bear the privileged presence of Christ."

The statement urges people to love the poor because Christ is present in them.

Christ's presence is certainly undeniable. The statement also states, however, that what is at stake is our eternal salvation. While this may be true, is it not open to a reading that the poor are treated instrumentally – as simply the means to heaven? Or conversely, that

PCP II, no. 312.

PCP II, no. 312.

PCP II, no. 312.

PCP II, no. 288.

not loving them is tantamount to disqualification from heaven? Are the poor not to be loved sacramentally, as ends in themselves?

The confusion between the Distinction of Planes understanding and the urgent demands made by the Philippine situation are brought to a greater focus when the Council discusses the relationship between the Church and the political community.

Following Vatican II, the Council notes that the relationship between the Church and the political community is one of autonomy – the two institutions are independent of each other, though they critically collaborate. In practice, the Council notes that pastors enunciate moral principles, while it is the laity who get directly involved in political matters. This understanding may account for the earlier stress placed upon individuals as the agents for social change, and not the Church as an institution.

Yet the Council notes that this general rule is not absolute. It notes that certain situations could arise where even the enunciating of moral principles can be seen as an act of partisan politics. More strongly, it argues that when the requirements of the Gospel as regards human dignity, justice, charity and the common good are at stake – these cannot be sacrificed "on the flimsy pretext that the Church does not engage in politics."

What the Council does not say here is that the above exception to the general rule is a daily reality in a country like the Philippines. Every day, justice and charity and the dignity of millions of Filipinos are threatened by an unjust and oppressive situation. The Church not only may act, but also must act. The Philippine Church did so, hierarchy and laity, during the Philippines' peaceful "People Power" revolution in February of 1986 at

PCP II, no. 341.

PCP II, no. 345.

Epifaňio de los Santos Avenue, Manila's main thoroughfare. The entire event is best known as EDSA, the thoroughfare's common appellation. 537

At EDSA, the Filipino people came out in the millions, peacefully, to overthrow the Marcos dictatorship. It was the Philippine church that triggered this peaceful "people power" revolution by stating publicly that the Marcos regime was sinful, and that there was a moral obligation to oust him. This denunciation was coupled with an annunciation that the Filipino could be a new person, one who was *maka-Diyos, maka-tao, maka-bayan* (pro-God, pro-humanity, pro-nation). This utopian denunciation and annunciation led to meaningful social change by overthrowing the corrupt dictatorship – a shining example of faith and political action fruitfully related.

The effects were short-lived, however, as the Filipinos soon reverted to their normal ways. But EDSA showed that the Filipino people could be created anew – become a new humanity in solidarity – become a people whose faith is a powerful force for social change. The Council's document describes the solidarity achieved at EDSA in bittersweet terms.

In the EDSA event of 1986, we showed to the world we are capable of meeting its (solidarity's) exacting conditions: For once we forgot petty and selfish differences, acted as one selflessly for the sole good of the nation. We forgot and we acted urged on by faith. The rest of the world watched astounded as we did the "impossible." And it learned and profited from what we did. But we – we have quickly forgotten, it seems, that one moment of unity and strength and have gone back to our enervating divisions... ⁵³⁸

At EDSA, millions of Filipinos gathered in response to the Philippine church hierarchy's call, armed only with rosaries and flowers, to face the tanks of the Marcos dictatorship. This peaceful revolution led to the deposition of Marcos. Tina Astorga presents a brief yet excellent theological treatise on EDSA. See Ma. Christina Astorga, "Culture, Religion, and Moral Vision: A Theological Discourse on the Filipino People Power Revolution of 1986" in *Theological Studies* September 2006, vol. 67, no. 3 pp. 567-601.

PCP II, no. 667.

This passage from PCP II about EDSA shows two things: that the Philippine Church can be a catalyst in effecting social change in the Philippines, and that it must continue to be such, else Philippine society just reverts to its old ways.

There seems to be inconsistency within the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines, stemming from two opposing forces. The first is the Distinction of Planes model. This understanding pulls the Council to emphasize the spiritual over the physical, and the afterlife over this earthly one. The second force is the gravity of the situation of suffering in the Philippines. There can be no doubt about the love for the Filipino people that all the delegates to the Council have. They are all certainly aware of the country's poverty. They all certainly desire to alleviate this suffering and build a nation akin to the vision quoted above. This second force pulls the Council toward statements more in line with Gutiérrez's position.

The same inconsistency cannot be found in Gutiérrez's theology, though. Gutiérrez is able to speak about the importance of temporal liberation without reducing salvation to just historical realities. Gutiérrez is able to do so precisely because of his understanding of liberation as a single complex process with three interdependent dimensions, with the notion of utopia acting as a bridge that mediates the relation of faith to political action without collapsing these poles. As quoted above, the Council has a goal of a just and equitable society for the Philippines -- it is clearly attempting to elucidate a theology that is responsive to the Filipino context, in line with the second force just mentioned. Unfortunately, the Distinction of Planes understanding --with its separation of spiritual and temporal values -- still lingers. The Council is not able to harmonize these two concerns because it does not incorporate into its theology

Gutiérrez's systematic understanding of the notion of utopia as a bridge between faith and political action.

5.3 The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines and Gutiérrez's notion of Utopia

The Council's analysis of the Philippine situation, though brief, lends itself very well to Gutiérrez's notion of utopia. The problem of poverty in the Philippines is by no means a simple one. It is a complex reality, involving not just economics, but politics and culture as well. Much of the Philippines' economic hardship is caused by its political structures, as the council's document has analyzed. This political structure is kept in place at least partly by a Philippine culture which is deeply religious and is characterized by a strong faith in God.

Some of the key elements of Gutiérrez's notion of utopia need to be revisited here. Utopia calls for a permanent cultural revolution (like EDSA, except ongoing). It entails conscientization. The Filipino people, the vast majority of whom are called by the Council as "unchurched," or lacking education in the faith, must be conscientisized that it is not God's will that they are poor. God's will is the exact opposite – God does not want anyone to be poor, and God's love and salvation are not to be attained solely in the afterlife. Salvation should begin now. These are essential elements of the Gospel which must be announced. The Filipinos must be made aware that they have the ability to change their future. The reason for their poverty lies not in a divinely preordained destiny, but in an oppressive structure and those who seek to perpetuate it -- the corrupt politicians and the oligarchic elite. These subjugating forces are the ones without *pakikisama* who luxuriate in their positions of wealth and privilege while the vast

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PCP II, nos. 13-17.

majority of Filipinos wallow in abject poverty. This elite group is made up of the ones without *utang na loob*, as they seek to do nothing to alleviate poverty when their wealth was stolen from the people. These injustices must be denounced as directly against God's will. However, the Council does not go this far in its denunciation because it is worried about interfering in politics. The notion of utopia guards precisely against the Church unjustly interfering in the political domain. Faith is not being directly related with political options. One's Christianity is not being held to a litmus test if a Christian votes for this person or holds to a particular political view. Judgments should be made on the concrete particular based on one's vision of what would make a better Filipino nation, guided by the values of the Kingdom. The notion of utopia allows people to bring their faith to bear upon their political situation (though not directly or immediately). It allows them to make the necessary denunciations in the Philippine context without collapsing their faith into their political judgments.

In the Second Plenary Council, the Philippine church identifies the problems within its society and acknowledges the need for meaningful social change. But the Council is not able to integrate this desire for social change (corresponding to Gutiérrez's first dimension of liberation) with its mission of evangelization and salvation from sin (corresponding to Gutiérrez's third dimension of liberation) precisely because it does not see that its own utopian vision (corresponding to Gutiérrez's second dimension of liberation), as quoted in full earlier, can serve as a bridge between political action and the Christian faith. With a better and more systematic understanding of the notion of utopia, the Philippine Church could better harness its power as a transformative force in society. The Philippine church could better bring the gospel values to bear upon the socio-

political situation by developing and encouraging the mediation of a utopian vision without risking the faith's identification with any one particular political position. To be sure, the church *qua* church would have to allow for disagreement among the faithful with respect to the utopian vision as well as about the specific strategies and steps required to approximate this vision. Yet ecclesial, communal formation is needed in relating faith to politics through utopia, and this endeavor should not be left to individuals unaided by the church (except for values formation). Furthermore, the Philippine church could then denounce the injustices in Philippine society inasmuch as these injustices do not conform to the vision of a better Filipino in a new and better Philippines, without necessarily alienating those of a different religious perspective.

The elements of Gutiérrez's notion of utopia are found in the Council's document. What is lacking is a systematic understanding of utopia, one that places utopia precisely at the center of an integral understanding of liberation as a single complex process with three dimensions held in unity without confusion. This more nuanced understanding of the notion of utopia and the central role it plays in a theology which seeks to relate faith and political action will enable the Council to overcome its inconsistency as regards the Church's mission in the Philippines. The notion of a just and humane society properly understood will enable the Philippine Church to work for evangelization and salvation without regarding the need for a quest for social justice as merely "pre-evangelization." Also, this understanding of the notion of utopia will enable the Philippine Church to work for a better world here on earth without fear of reducing the church's mission and message of salvation to simply the temporal sphere. Furthermore, such an understanding now frees the Philippine Church to address strongly as a church the daily and urgent

situation of poverty and oppression in the Philippines without having to rely solely upon the individuals whose consciences it forms. This understanding of utopia will enable the Philippine Church to act as an institution against the injustice in the Philippines, without fear of overstepping its bounds.

Throughout this dissertation, the argument is made for the importance and centrality of the notion of utopia in understanding Gutiérrez's theology. In this final chapter, a close look at a test-case has been made: how the Philippine Church, through the Second Plenary Council, has attempted to articulate a theology that remains faithful to the Gospel message of salvation while remaining relevant and responsive to the situation of poverty and injustice in the country. In this articulation, the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines uses a number of concepts found in Latin American liberation theology, which is understandable given the remarkable similarity between the Philippines and Latin America. That same similarity of massive and widespread injustice and poverty is also the reason why the Distinction of Planes model, which Gutiérrez found inadequate for Latin America, is also inadequate for the Philippines. Since the Council seems to be operating under the Distinction of Planes model and a quantitative understanding of salvation, it does not quite succeed in relating the Christian faith and the church's mission to the oppression that the Filipinos face daily and the political action necessary for meaningful and lasting social change. This problem can be solved precisely by using the Council's own utopian vision the way Gutiérrez advocates – as a bridge between the faith and political action. It is such an understanding of the notion of utopia that will enable the Council's appropriation of Gutiérrez's theology of liberation to be complete.

CONCLUSION

Gustavo Gutierrez's theology of liberation did not drop down from the heavens. Rather, this theology is a culmination of Gutierrez's struggles to bring his theological training to bear on his concrete historical situation. The journey began with his studies in Europe where he received his theological education, particularly in the French *nouvelle theologie*. Upon his return to his native Peru in the early 1960s, he re-examined his theological insights in light of the massive injustice going on in Latin America. Then, armed with the new theological insights arising from the Second Vatican Council and Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, Gutierrez began articulating a theology that was consistent with his training and was at the same time responsive to the situation in his native land. The Latin American Bishops' council at Medellin adopted the approach and insights of this theology, and thus Latin American liberation theology was born.

The movement got its name from Gutierrez's seminal opus, *A Theology of Liberation*. In this work, Gurtierrez articulates a theology that seeks to relate meaningfully the Christian faith to the political action required for social change in Latin America. Gutierrez first re-examines the concept of salvation, arguing against a "quantitative" view that dualistically tended to diminish historical action in favor of purely spiritual realities. Instead, he argues for a more "qualitative" view of salvation that incorporates the human struggle for liberation within Christ's salvific work. This re-

examination leads Gutierrez to focus on the concept of integral liberation, understood as a single process with three inseparable dimensions: 1) economic and political emancipation, 2) the creation of a new humanity in a new society characterized by freedom and justice, and 3) freedom from sin for communion with God and others. For Gutierrez, the first dimension corresponds to political action. The second dimension corresponds to utopia. The third dimension corresponds to faith. Gutierrez argues that it is only possible to relate meaningfully political action to faith through the mediation of utopia. Otherwise, what results is either a complete non-intersection of faith with historical commitment, or the collapse of the two into an undifferentiated unity.

In his subsequent full-length books, Gutierrez does not speak explicitly of the notion of utopia, focusing instead on topics such as spirituality, theology, and the triune God. In these works he grapples with such parallel realities as: 1) gratuitousness and justice, 2) mystical language and prophetic language, and 3) love of God and love of neighbor. In dealing with these concepts, Gutierrez implicitly uses the notion of utopia to once again allow for meaningful relation, without separation or identification. It is perhaps unfortunate that Gutierrez does not explicitly treat of utopia in these works, as this omission may have led some critics to misunderstand his theology.

Given the importance of the notion of utopia to Gutierrez's theology, as argued above, one wonders why Gutierrez did not treat explicitly of the topic except in *A Theology of Liberation*. Two possibilities come to mind. First, as mentioned above, Gutierrez's subsequent works are not meant as replacements to *A Theology of Liberation*. Throughout all these later works, the insights contained in *A Theology of Liberation*, including the discussion of utopia, are assumed. The second possibility could be a desire

on Gutierrez's part to avoid criticism stemming from people misunderstanding his use of the concept of utopia.

There are indeed thinkers who have studied Gutierrez and identified his three-dimensional understanding of liberation, along with the centrality of the notion of utopia, as the fulcrum around which Gutierrez's theology revolves. These thinkers are critical of Gutierrez's theology, however. They argue that Gutierrez either separates faith from political action, or collapses these two poles into an undifferentiated unity. What these critics seem to miss is how Gutierrez uses the notion of utopia to mediate between faith and historical commitment. Given these misunderstandings of his theology, perhaps Gutierrez should re-visit his use of the notion of utopia as a mediating bridge and treat of the topic explicitly. This discussion could go a long way towards answering some of his harshest critics.

A country like the Philippines serves as further evidence of the significance the notion of utopia plays in mediating between faith and political action. Like Latin America, the Philippines is deeply religious, predominantly Catholic, has Spanish colonial roots, and is characterized by massive injustice and poverty. In this light, the Philippine church has tried to articulate a theological understanding that seeks to meaningfully relate its Christian faith with the historical situation of suffering of the Filipino people. The effort falls short, however, due to the absence of a systematic treatment of the role the notion of utopia plays as a bridge necessary to mediate between faith and political action in the Philippines.

It is possible to conceive of a theology that is genuinely Filipino – attendant to what makes this people unique and beautiful – and one that incorporates Gutierrez's

understanding of liberation and the key role that utopia plays within it. Like Gutierrez's Latin America, the Philippines needs to relate meaningfully its deep Christian faith with its situation of widespread injustice. The Philippine church can do it. It has done it before, with the peaceful revolution at EDSA as the shining example. The Philippines needs to recapture that same spirit, and sustain it. Jesuit priest John Carroll relates a story that perhaps best illustrates the point. During the EDSA revolution, as the tanks came to the people massed in the streets, one man blocked the advance with his expensive Mercedes Benz. Reflecting later, the man averred that he realized he was willing to die. At EDSA, the man was willing to sacrifice his expensive automobile and even his life. Carroll now asks the key question: would that same man now be willing to give up his Mercedes so that the poor might have a better life?

Like this rich man, the Filipino people showed tremendous generosity, courage, and solidarity during the EDSA revolution. Literally millions were willing to sacrifice their lives, standing in front of hundreds of tanks, armed only with rosaries, flowers, songs, and a smile. The key question now arises: can the Filipinos do it again? Can the Filipino people show the same spirit of EDSA, though now not in a revolution to overthrow a dictator, but in a revolution aiming to bring about a Philippines without injustice and poverty? Such a utopian reality can be approximated – the Filipino people and the Philippine church have demonstrated they have that kind of people power. But the vision is essential because it is this utopian ideal that allows for the meaningful relation of the Filipinos' rich Christian faith with the political action necessary to bring about meaningful social change within the country.

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See John Carroll, S.J., "Looking beyond EDSA: Part II: Values, Power, and Scoial Transformation," *Human Society* 43 (1990) 1-14, at 13.

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